

DOROTHY
WARRSWORTH

By

EDMUND LEE

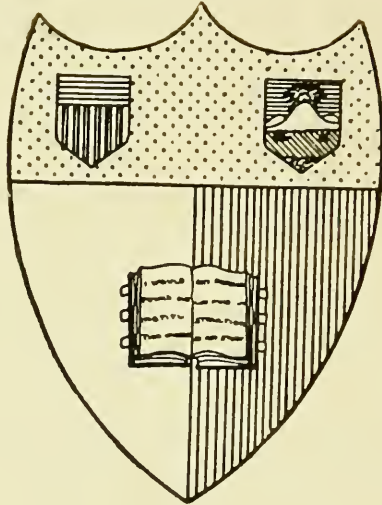
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DOROTHY WORDSWORTH

THE STORY OF A SISTER'S LOVE.

BY
EDMUND LEE.

London :
JAMES CLARKE & CO., 13 & 14, FLEET STREET.

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TO
MISS QUILLINAN,
A STRONG LINK
BETWEEN THE PAST AND PRESENT GENERATIONS
OF THE FAMILY OF WHICH
DOROTHY WORDSWORTH
WAS SUCH A DISTINGUISHED ORNAMENT,
THIS LITTLE WORK IS (BY PERMISSION)
GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED.

PREFACE.

THIS little book owes its origin to the fact that, with the exception of Professor Shairp's Sketch contained in the preface to the "Tour in Scotland," no biography or memoir of the subject of it has hitherto been written. Seeing what an important part Miss Wordsworth occupied in influencing the revival of English poetry at the close of the last century, this has frequently been to me a matter of surprise. To the best of my knowledge, she does not even occupy any place in the numerous sketches of famous women which have from time to time appeared. At the same time the references to her in the biographies of her brother and in the reviews of his works are many.

My main object in the present work has been, so far as permissible, to gather together into the form of a Memoir of her life various allusions to Miss Wordsworth, together with such further particulars as might be procurable, and with some reflections to which such a life gives rise. My task has, therefore, been one of a compiler rather than an author.

I acknowledge my great indebtedness to all sources from whence information has been obtained. In addition to the authorities after mentioned, I desire especially to mention the kindness of Dr. Sadler for his permission to reprint the letters of Miss Wordsworth to

the late Mr. Henry Crabb Robinson, published in his "Diary and Reminiscences"; and of Mr. F. W. H. Myers for the like permission to make use of some letters which for the first time appeared in his "Wordsworth."

However far I have failed in my original design, and however imperfectly I may have performed my self-appointed task of love, it cannot be doubted that no name can more fittingly have a place in female biography than that of Dorothy Wordsworth.

BRADFORD, 1886.

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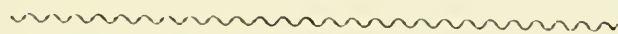
The Transactions of the Wordsworth Society.

“ I knew a maid,

Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green fields
Could they have known her, would have loved ; methought
Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
And everything she looked on, should have had
An intimation how she bore herself
Towards them, and to all creatures. God delights
In such a being ; for, her common thoughts
Are piety, her life is gratitude.”

THE PRELUDE.

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH.



CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE influences which help to shape human destiny are many and varied. At some period in the early history of two lives, beginning their course separately, one of them, by coming into contact with the other, is quickened into deeper vitality, and the germ of a great and unthought-of future is formed. Lives touch each other, and from thenceforth, like meeting waters, their onward course is destined, and flows through deeper and broader channels.

Among the most commanding of human influences is that of *woman*. As mother, or sister, or wife we find her, at every period of a man's existence, occupying a prominent part as his guide, comforter, and friend. Not unfrequently it happens that the influence of a sister is the greatest, and that to which a career is due. Especially is this so when the mother dies whilst the brother and sister are young. The influence of the wife, all-powerful though it may be, is of a later date, when character and conduct have to a great extent become formed, and the tendency of genius settled. When the sister's companionship gives place to that of

the wife, a career may have become developed. In this way the most dominant power may remain unrevealed ; and the blossoming and perfection of character may never be traced to their original source.

Many pleasant stories of affection between brothers and sisters, and of their inspiration of each other, have been told ; and many more have existed among those who have lived unhistoric lives, and whose annals are recorded only among memories which linger round lonely hearths. Lovely and pleasant in their saddened lives were Charles and Mary Lamb. The way in which they were each devoted to the other, and in which they were bound up in each other's well-being to the complete forgetfulness of self, suggests a pleasing and pathetic picture of fraternal fidelity, while it reveals a domestic history the most touching and tragic the world has known.

We have a companion picture, but a more happy and pleasant one, in the lives of William and Dorothy Wordsworth.

The culture and well-being of a nation depend largely upon the character, purity, and progress of its literature. To no class of writers has the world been more indebted than to its poets—those “rare souls, whose thoughts enrich the blood of the world.” It was well said by one of these : “Poetry has been to me its own exceeding great reward. It has soothed my afflictions ; it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments ; it has endeared solitude ; and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the good and the beautiful in all that meets and surrounds me.”

Among those who have permanently elevated and enriched our English literature during the present century, none is entitled to a more honoured place than is William Wordsworth, our greatest laureate ; and none of the influences which entered into his life, and served to build up his great career, and to complete his great work, can fail to be of interest. And of all the world's benefactors—of all who in any of the primary departments, have achieved most signal distinction, has none been more indebted to the aid of another, than was Wordsworth to the devoted aid and the constraining and softening power of his sister.

In many respects there is a marked similarity between the lives of Charles and Mary Lamb and those of William and Dorothy Wordsworth. The burden of the story of each is that of a brother's and sister's love. But there is also a great difference. While one is the tale of an elder sister's affection, and of the brother's self-sacrifice for the tender care of her during periods of nature's saddest affliction, the other tells how a younger sister consecrated her life to her brother's greatest good, relinquishing for herself everything outside him in such a way that she became absorbed in his own existence. But as a self-sacrificing love always brings its own reward, the poet's sister attained hers. She is for all time identified and associated with her brother, who, with a grateful love, has "crowned her for immortality." As Mr. Paxton Hood remarks : "Not Laura with Petrarch, nor Beatrice with Dante, nor the fair Geraldine with Surrey, are more really connected than is Wordsworth with his sister Dorothy."

CHAPTER II.

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LIFE.

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH was the only daughter and third child of John and Anne Wordsworth. She was born on Christmas Day, 1771, at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, being a year and nine months younger than her famous brother, the poet. John Wordsworth, the father, was an attorney-at-law, who had attained considerable success in his profession, being the solicitor of the then Earl of Lonsdale, in an old manor-house belonging to whose family he resided. Miss Wordsworth's mother was, on the maternal side, descended from an old and distinguished family, being the only daughter of William Cookson, of Penrith, who had married Dorothy Crackenthorp, whose family, we are informed, had, since the early part of the fourteenth century, resided at Newbiggen Hall, Westmoreland. The Wordsworths themselves traced their descent from a Yorkshire family of that name who had settled in the county about the time of the Norman Conquest.

Dorothy had the misfortune to lose her excellent mother when she was a little more than six years old. After this great loss her father's health declined, and she was left an orphan at the early age of twelve. The sources of information concerning her childhood are very meagre.

We cannot doubt that for the qualities of mind and

heart which distinguished her she was, in common with the other members of her family—her four brothers, who all won for themselves successful careers—indebted to her parenthood, and especially to her mother, of whom the poet says :—

“ She was the heart
And hinge of all our learning and our loves.”

The beauty and gentleness of disposition by which, in after years, Dorothy Wordsworth developed into such a perfect woman were not absent in her early childhood. Although we know so little, we have abundant testimony that as a child she was fittingly named *Dorothea*—the gift of God—and that then her life of ministry to her poet-brother began. We can well imagine how the little dark-eyed brunette, sparkling and impulsive damsel as she was, and the only girl in the family, became the darling of the circle. In after years, when her favourite and famous brother had entered on the career which she helped so much to stimulate and to perfect, we find in his poems many allusions to her, as well in her prattling childhood as in her mature years. The sight of a butterfly calls to the poet's mind the pleasures of the early home, the time when he and his little playmate “together chased the butterfly.” The kindness of her child heart is told in a few expressive words. He says :—

“ A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey ;—with leaps and springs
I followed on from brake to bush ;
But she—God love her !—*feared to brush*
The dust from off its wings.”

The sight of a sparrow's nest, many years after, also served to bring to the poet's remembrance his father's home and his sister's love. The "bright blue eggs" appeared to him "a vision of delight." In them he saw another sparrow's nest, in the years gone by daily visited in company with his little sister.

"Behold, within that leafy shade,
Those bright blue eggs together laid !
On me the chance-discovered sight
Gleamed like a vision of delight.
I started, seeming to espy
The home and sheltered bed,
The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
My Father's house, in wet or dry,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together visited.
She looked at it and seemed to fear it,
Dreading, though wishing, to be near it :
Such heart was in her, being then
A little Prattler among men.
The Blessing of my later years
Was with me when a boy :
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears ;
And humble cares, and delicate fears ;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears,
And love, and thought, and joy."

It is to her early thoughtfulness that the poet alludes in another poem having reference to the same period. In this poem he represents his sister and her young

play-fellows gathering spring flowers, and thus records her prudent "Foresight":—

"Here are daisies, take your fill ;
Pansies, and the cuckoo-flower :
Of the lofty daffodil
Make your bed or make your bower ;
Fill your lap and fill your bosom ;
Only spare the strawberry-blossom !

* * * * *

God has given a kindlier power
To the favoured strawberry-flower.
Hither soon as spring is fled
You and Charles and I will walk ;
Lurking berries, ripe and red,
'Then will hang on every stalk,
Each within the leafy bower ;
And for that promise spare the flower !"

An incident showing the tender sensibility of her nature when a child is also deserving of special mention. In a note to the "Second Evening Voluntary," Wordsworth says : "My sister, when she first heard the voice of the sea from this point (the high ground on the coast of Cumberland overlooking Whitehaven and the sea beyond it) and beheld the sea spread before her, burst into tears. Our family then lived at Cockermouth, and this fact was often mentioned among us as indicating the sensibility for which she was so remarkable."

The death of their mother was, however, the signal for separation. Her brother William was sent to school at Hawkshead, in North Lancashire, and Dorothy went

to reside with her maternal grandfather at Penrith. Subsequently, during her brother's school and college days, we are informed that she lived chiefly at Halifax with her cousin, occasionally making lengthened visits at Farncliffe, to her cousin, Dr. Cookson, Canon of Windsor. Although they were in this way for some years deprived of each other's society, except during occasional college vacations, they were not forgotten by each other, and their early love did not grow cold. Wordsworth, having gone to Cambridge in 1787, during one of his early vacations visited his relations at Penrith, when he was for a short period restored to his sister's society. In his autobiographical poem, "The Prelude," he has thus recorded the fact :—

“In summer, making quest for works of art,
Or scenes renowned for beauty, I explored
That streamlet whose blue current works its way
Between romantic Dovedale's spiry rocks ;
Pried into Yorkshire dales, or hidden tracts
Of my own native region, and was blest
Between these sundry wanderings with a joy
Above all joys, that seemed another morn,
Risen on mid noon ; blest with the presence
Of that sole Sister ——
Now, after separation desolate,
Restored to me—such absence that she seemed
A gift then first bestowed.”

It cannot be doubted that the poetic tendency of Dorothy Wordsworth's mind, like that of her brother, was fostered by the beauties of the natural scenery in

the midst of which a large portion of her childhood was cast. The beauty of wood, and lake, and mountain early sank into their receptive minds, and helped to make them what they became, both to each other, and to the world. To the influence of Nature in the maturing of their intellect, the development of both mind and heart, it may be necessary to refer later.

During the last of his college vacations—that of the year 1790, so remarkable in French history—Wordsworth made a three months' tour on the Continent with his friend, Mr. Robert Jones. Writing to his sister, then budding into womanhood, from the Lake of Constance, a fine description of the scenery through which they were passing, he says: "I have thought of you perpetually; and never have my eyes rested upon a scene of great loveliness but I have almost instantly wished that you could for a moment be transported to the place where I stood to enjoy it. I have been more particularly induced to form those wishes, because the scenes of Switzerland have no resemblance to any I have found in England; consequently it may probably never be in your power to form an idea of them." And he concludes by saying: "I must now bid you adieu, with assuring you that you are perpetually in my thoughts."

Wordsworth took his degree, and left Cambridge in 1791. Being undecided as to his future occupation, he spent the succeeding twelve months in France. His life for some time was wandering and uncertain. He has himself stated that he was once told by an intimate friend of his mother's that she had said the only one of

her five children about whose future life she was anxious was William ; and he, she said, would be remarkable either for good or for evil.

Wordsworth's experience of the French Revolution was far from being happy. His expectations were ruthlessly disappointed. With his ardent spirit he could not be an unconcerned observer of the stirring events which then agitated that ill-fated country. He had bright hopes of great results from the Revolution—of signal benefits to mankind. How bitterly he was disappointed we learn something from "The Prelude." The awful scenes of the time of blood and terror which followed were so deeply imaged on his mind, that for years afterwards they haunted his dreams, and he seemed

" To hear a voice that cried,
To the whole city, sleep no more."

Fortunately for him he was obliged to return home, led, as he afterwards acknowledged, " by the gracious Providence of heaven."

It was now quite time that Wordsworth should determine upon his future career ; and this important subject seems to have occasioned some anxiety amongst his friends. His father, having been taken away in the prime of life, had not been able to make much provision for his children, especially as a considerable sum which had been due to him from the Earl of Lonsdale remained unpaid. It had been intended that, after leaving the University, Wordsworth should enter the Church. To this, however, he had conscientious objections. On other grounds the profession of the law was equally

distasteful to him. His three brothers had chosen their pursuits, in which they all lived to distinguish themselves ; but the one who was destined to be the greatest of them all, we find, at the age of twenty-three, still undetermined as to his future course of life. He had, indeed, at an early age, begun to write some of his earlier poems, to which, it is worthy of remark, he was incited and encouraged by his sister. Among other pieces, his "Evening Walk," addressed to his sister, had been composed when, at school and during his college vacations, he had been "far from that dearest friend."

However much Wordsworth's relatives and friends generally may have been disappointed in his want of decision, Dorothy's confidence in him and her love to him never wavered. In a letter, written to a dear friend, dated February, 1792, she says, speaking of her brothers Christopher and William : "Christopher is steady and sincere in his attachments. William has both these virtues in an eminent degree, and a sort of violence of affection—if I may so term it—which demonstrates itself every moment of the day, when the objects of his affection are present with him, in a thousand almost imperceptible attentions to their wishes, in a sort of restless watchfulness which I know not how to describe, a tenderness that never sleeps, and, at the same time, such a delicacy of manner as I have observed in few men." Again, writing in June, 1792, to the same friend, she says : "I have strolled into a neighbouring meadow, where I am enjoying the melody of birds and the busy sounds of a fine summer's evening. But, oh ! how imperfect is my pleasure whilst I am alone ! Why are

you not seated with me? and my dear William, why is he not here also? I could almost fancy that I see you both near me. I hear *you* point out a spot, where, if we could erect a little cottage and call it our own, we should be the happiest of human beings. I see my brother fired with the idea of leading his sister to such a retreat. Our parlour is in a moment furnished; our garden is adorned by magic; the roses and honeysuckles spring at our command; the wood behind the house lifts its head, and furnishes us with a winter's shelter and a summer's noonday shade. My dear friend, I trust that ere long you will be, without the aid of imagination, the companion of my walks, and my dear William may be of our party. . . . He is now going upon a tour in the West of England with a gentleman who was formerly a schoolfellow—a man of fortune, who is to bear all the expenses of the journey, and only requests the favour of William's company. He is perfectly at liberty to quit this companion as soon as anything more advantageous offers. But it is enough to say that I am likely to have the happiness of introducing you to my beloved brother. You must forgive me for talking so much of him. My affection hurries me on, and makes me forget that you cannot be so much interested in the subject as I am. You do not know him; you do not know how amiable he is. Perhaps you may reply: 'But I know how blinded you are.' Well, my dearest, I plead guilty at once; I *must* be blind; he cannot be so pleasing as my fondness makes him. I am willing to allow that half the virtues with which I fancy him endowed are the creation of my love; but surely I may

be excused! He was never afraid of comforting his sister; he never left her in anger; he always met her with joy; he preferred her society to every other pleasure—or, rather, when we were so happy as to be within each other's reach, he had no pleasure when we were compelled to be divided. Do not, then, expect too much from this brother, of whom I have delighted so to talk to you. In the first place, you must be with him more than once before he will be perfectly easy in conversation. In the second place, his person is not in his favour—at least, I should think not—but I soon ceased to discover this; nay, I almost thought that the opinion I had formed was erroneous. He is, however, certainly rather plain, though otherwise has an extremely thoughtful countenance; but when he speaks, it is often lighted up by a smile which I think very pleasing. But enough, he is my brother; why should I describe him? I shall be launching again into panegyric.” Again she says: “William writes to me regularly, and is a most affectionate brother.”

It is gratifying to know that this warm attachment of Miss Wordsworth to her brother was at all times returned. In the year 1793, when they were discussing the means of realising their cherished idea of retiring to their little cottage, Wordsworth writes: “I will write to my uncle, and tell him I cannot think of going anywhere before I have been with you. Whatever answer he gives me, I certainly will make a point of once more mingling my transports with yours. Alas! my dear sister, how soon must this happiness expire; yet there are moments worth ages.” Again he says: “Oh, my

dear, dear sister, with what transport shall I again meet you ! with what rapture shall I again wear out the day in your sight ! . . . I see you in a moment running, or rather flying, to my arms."

In the early part of 1794, having still no fixed residence, we find Wordsworth staying at Halifax. Writing in February of that year to a friend, he says : " My sister is under the same roof with me ; indeed, it was to see her that I came into the country. I have been doing nothing, and still continue to do nothing. What is to become of me I know not." About this time the brother and sister together made a tour in the Lake District. She writes : " After having enjoyed the company of my brother William at Halifax, we set forward by coach towards Whitehaven, and thence to Kendal. I walked, with my brother at my side, from Kendal to Grasmere, eighteen miles, and afterwards from Grasmere to Keswick, fifteen miles, through the most delightful country that was ever seen. We are now at a farmhouse about half a mile from Keswick. When I came I intended to stay only a few days ; but the country is so delightful, and, above all, I have so full an enjoyment of my brother's company, that I have determined to stay a few weeks longer."

In his uncertainty of mind Wordsworth projected the publishing of a periodical, and afterwards contributing to the London Newspaper Press. That the latter scheme was not put into practice was owing to the fact that just at this time an incident occurred which had no small influence upon what may be considered the turning point in his life.

CHAPTER III.

RACEDOWN AND ALFOXDEN.

TO all lovers of Wordsworth it is well known how, while he was yet undecided as to his future calling, he went to nurse a young friend named Raisley Calvert, who was afflicted with a malady which threatened to prove fatal, and by whose side he felt it his duty to remain. After a protracted illness his friend died, and bequeathed him a legacy of £900. It is probable that in this generous act, to which Wordsworth has more than once recorded his indebtedness, Mr. Calvert was actuated by mixed motives; that it was to be regarded not only as an expression of gratitude, but that he also perceived in his friend talents which others were slow to recognise, and desired thus to provide him with the means of devoting himself, at any rate for a time, to the pursuit of poetry. However this may be, the incident cannot but be regarded as a link in the chain of providential circumstances which combined to prepare the poet for his future high calling. It is not, however, intended in this sketch to refer to Wordsworth himself more than is necessary for the purpose of elucidating any events in the life and character of his sister, or of tracing her influence upon him. Having thus obtained the means of livelihood for a few years, one of their cherished hopes was realised. His childhood's playmate became his

constant and lifelong companion, devoting herself to him and his interests and aims as only a noble woman could have done.

At what a critical time Miss Wordsworth thus entered more closely into the life of her brother we learn from his biography, as well as from his works. Dejected and despondent by reason of the scenes of which he had been an eyewitness in France, and the terrible days which followed, Wordsworth was at this time greatly in danger of becoming misanthropic, and of giving way to a melancholy which might have coloured all his life, and deprived his works of the healthful and educating influence which they breathe. All disappointment and sorrow may become the precursor of blessing, the mother of a great hope. It is the bruised herb that exudes its fragrance ; the broken heart that, when bound, pulsates most truly. It was a saying of Goethe that he never had an affliction which did not turn into a poem. But disappointment may also be the parent of gloom, and pave the way to a spirit of morose indifference. At such junctures a life may, by the skilful leading of a wise affection, be saved for beauty and happiness, for greater good and more exalted attainment and enjoyment, by reason of the very sorrow which, unhallowed, would have plunged it into bitterness.

However much Wordsworth's goodness of heart and ardent love of Nature helped to protect him, it was at this critical period that he was chiefly indebted to the soothing and cheering power of his sister for uplifting him from the gloom which had gathered around him, and for restoring and maintaining that equable frame of

mind which from thenceforth unvaryingly characterised him. Her clear insight and womanly instinct at this time saw deeper into the sources of real satisfaction ; and her helpful and healing sympathy came to his aid. By her tact she led him from the distracting cares of political agitation to those more elevating and satisfying influences which an ardent and contemplative love of Nature and poetry cultivate, and which sweet and kindred human affections strengthen and develop. It remained for Miss Wordsworth, if not to awaken, to draw out and stimulate her brother's better nature, to deaden what was unworthy, and to encourage, by tender care and patient endeavour, that higher life towards which his mind and soul were turned. She became, and for many years continued to be, the loadstar of his existence, and affords one of the most pleasing instances of sisterly devotion and fidelity on record. In her brother was verified the poet's prophecy :—

“ True heart and shining star shall guide thee right.”

Well was it for Wordsworth, and for us, that he had a sister, and that it was to this brother—one after her own heart—she at this juncture devoted herself. In this we may see another of the providential circumstances that beset the career of Wordsworth. As Spenser says :—

“ It chanced—

Eternal God that chance did guide.”

Writing of Miss Wordsworth at this time, her nephew, the late Bishop of Lincoln, says : “ She was endowed with tender sensibility, with an exquisite perception of

beauty, with a retentive recollection of what she saw, with a felicitous tact in discerning and admirable skill in delineating natural objects with graphic accuracy and vivid gracefulness. She weaned him from contemporary politics, and won him to beauty and truth."

A writer in *The Quarterly Review*, many years ago (I believe the late Mr. J. G. Lockhart), referring to this period, writes: "Depressed and bewildered, he turned to abstract science, and was beginning to torment his mind with fresh problems, when, after his long voyage through unknown seas in search of Utopia, with sails full set and without compass or rudder, his sister came to his aid, and conducted him back to the quiet harbour from which he started. His visits to her had latterly been short and far between, until his brightening fortunes enabled them to indulge the wish of their hearts to live together, and then she convinced him that he was born to be a poet, and had no call to lose himself in the endless labyrinth of theoretical puzzles. The calm of a home would alone have done much towards sobering his mind. While he roamed restlessly about the world he was drawn in by every eddy, and obeyed the influence of every wind: but when once he had escaped from the turmoil, into the pure and peaceful pleasures of domestic existence, he felt the vanity and vexation of his previous course."

Wordsworth himself, afterwards writing of this same period of his life, says:—

"Depressed, bewildered thus, I did not walk
With scoffers, seeking light and gay revenge
From indiscriminate laughter, nor sit down

In reconciliation with an utter waste
Of intellect.

* * * * *

Then it was—
Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good!—
That the beloved sister in whose sight
Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice
Of sudden admonition—like a brook
That did but *cross* a lonely road, now
Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn,
Companion never lost through many a league—
Maintain'd for me a saving intercourse
With my true self; for, though bedimmed and changed
Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed
Than as a clouded, and a waning moon;
She whispered still that brightness would return.
She in the midst of all preserved me still
A poet; made me seek beneath that name,
And that alone, my office upon earth.”

We thus find Miss Wordsworth keeping house with her brother, who, having at length determined upon his course of life, was, in 1795, living at Racedown Lodge in Dorsetshire. From this time forth, amid all the changes of fortune and condition, they were close and life-long companions.

However great may have been her influence upon him previously, it now became a moulding and educating power. They were both in the strength of their youth—that time of radiant enjoyment—bound not only by that most endearing of natural ties, but by tastes, aims,

and hopes most singularly mutual. The close association of daily intercourse and community of thought, together with a thorough sympathy, seemed now, as only an ardent enthusiasm and devoted love of kindred objects can do, to cement their lives. In this their first home, the only one which they had really known since childhood, and to which they had so longingly looked forward, they were all in all to each other. Separation from the busy world, and from society, was no hardship to them, so long as they were uninterrupted in the society of each other, and in the pursuits they loved. Though in a part of the country, then so remote that they had only a post once a week, they went into raptures over their lot. The house which they temporarily occupied was, we are informed, pretty well stocked with books, and they were industrious in both indoor and outdoor occupations. They read, and thought, and talked together, rambling through the lovely combs and by the ever-changing sea. "My brother," she says, "handles the spade with great dexterity," while she herself was engaged in reading Italian authors.

A writer in *Blackwood*, a few years ago, referring to Miss Wordsworth at this time, says: "She had been separated from her brother since their childhood, and now at the first moment when their re-union was possible, seems to have rushed to him with all the impetuosity of her nature. Without taking his sister into consideration, no just estimate can be formed of Wordsworth. He was, as it were, henceforward, the spokesman to the world of two souls. It was not that she visibly or consciously aided and stimulated him, but

that she *was* him—a second pair of eyes to see, a second and more delicate intuition to discern, a second heart to enter into all that came before their mutual observation. This union was so close, that in many instances it becomes difficult to discern which is the brother and which the sister. She was part not only of his life, but of his imagination. He saw by her, felt through her, at her touch the strings of the instrument began to thrill, the great melodies awoke. Her journals are Wordsworth in prose, just as his poems are Dorothy in verse. The one soul kindled at the other. The brother and sister met with all the enthusiasm of youthful affection, strengthened and concentrated by long separation, and the delightful sense that here at last was the possibility of making for themselves a home.” After referring to their pecuniary means, the writer adds: “And with this, in their innocent frugality and courage, they faced the world like a new pair of babes in the wood. Their aspirations in one way were infinite, but in another modest as any cottager’s. Daily bread sufficed them, and the pleasure to be derived from Nature, who is cheap, and gives herself lavishly without thought or hope of reward.”

Although at this remote place friends and visitors were few, it was here the Wordsworths first made the acquaintance of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who, in conjunction with Southey, had already begun to make a name. This acquaintance ripened into a close and uninterrupted friendship, only to be ended by death. It was here also that Wordsworth composed his tragedy *The Borderers* and “The Ruined Cottage,” which latter

poem afterwards formed the first part of the "Excursion." The ardour with which the young poets entered into each other's plans, and the enthusiasm of the sister, who was in such perfect *rappor*t with them, is gathered from her statement that the "first thing that was read when he (Coleridge) came was William's new poem, 'The Ruined Cottage,' with which he was much delighted ; and after tea he repeated to us two acts and a half of his tragedy *Osorio*. The next morning William read his tragedy *The Borderers*."

The following description of Coleridge, from the pen of Miss Wordsworth, cannot fail to be of interest. Writing to a friend, she says : " You had a great loss in not seeing Coleridge. He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful, and, like William, excites himself so much about every little trifle. At first I thought him very plain—that is, for about three minutes. He is pale, thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth ; longish, loose-growing, half-curling, rough, black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes, you think no more about them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark, but grey—such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression ; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind. It has more of the 'poet's eye in fine frenzy rolling' than I ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows and an overhanging forehead."

By the side of this striking picture of Coleridge may be fittingly placed his first impressions of Miss

Wordsworth. Writing to Mr. Cottle from Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire, where he was then residing, he says :
“ Wordsworth and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman, indeed !—in mind, I mean, and heart ; for her person is such that, if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her ordinary ; if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty ; but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion her most innocent soul outbeams so brightly that who saw her would say :

‘ Guilt was a thing impossible in her.’

Her information various ; her eye watchful in minutest observation of Nature ; and her taste a perfect electrometer. It bends, protrudes, and draws in at subtlest beauties and most recondite faults.”

From this description of Coleridge it might appear that Miss Wordsworth was one of those happy possessors of a face and features which though in repose might appear homely, became illumined by the sweet smiles of love—flashed into beauty by the gleam of the soul-lit eye.

The pleasure which the friendship of Coleridge afforded them induced Wordsworth and his sister to change their residence in order to be near him. Accordingly, in the summer of 1797, they settled at Alfoxden, near Nether Stowey. Alfoxden is described by Hazlitt as a “ romantic old family mansion of the St. Aubins,” and he gives the additional information that it was then in the possession of a friend of the poet, who gave him the free use of it. De Quincey states that he

understood that the Wordsworths had the use of the house on condition of keeping it in repair.

Although Miss Wordsworth afterwards spoke of Racedown as the dearest place of her recollections upon the whole surface of the island, as the first home she had, she was soon enamoured of her new abode, and the scenery of Somersetshire. Of the neighbourhood of Nether Stowey she says, in a letter to a friend, dated 4th July: "There is everything there—sea, woods wild as fancy ever painted; brooks clear and pebbly as in Cumberland; villages as romantic; and William and I, in a wander by ourselves, found out a sequestered waterfall in a dell formed by steep hills, covered by full-grown timber-trees. The woods are as fine as those at Lowther, and the country more romantic; it has the character of the less grand parts of the neighbourhood of the lakes."

Being settled at Alfoxden, she writes again, on 14th August: "Here we are, in a large mansion, in a large park, with seventy head of deer around us. But I must begin with the day of leaving Racedown to pay Coleridge a visit. You know how much we were delighted with the neighbourhood of Stowey. The evening that I wrote to you, William and I had rambled as far as this house, and pryed into the recesses of our little brook, but without any more fixed thoughts upon it than some dreams of happiness in a little cottage, and passing wishes that such a place might be found out. We spent a fortnight at Coleridge's: in the course of that time we heard that this house was to let, applied for it, and took it. Our principal inducement was Coleridge's

society. It was a month yesterday since we came to Alfoxden.

“The house is a large mansion, with furniture enough for a dozen families like ours. There is a very excellent garden, well stocked with vegetables and fruit. The garden is at the end of the house, and our favourite parlour, as at Racedown, looks that way. In front is a little court, with grass-plot, gravel-walk, and shrubs; the moss roses were in full beauty a month ago. The front of the house is to the south; but is screened from the sun by a high hill which rises immediately from it. This hill is beautiful, scattered irregularly and abundantly with trees, and topped with fern, which spreads a considerable way down it. The deer dwell here, and sheep, so that we have a living prospect. From the end of the house we have a view of the sea, over a woody, meadow country; and exactly opposite the window, where I now sit, is an immense wood, whose round top from this point has exactly the appearance of a mighty dome. In some parts of this wood there is an under-grove of hollies, which are now very beautiful. In a glen at the bottom of the wood is the waterfall of which I spoke, a quarter of a mile from the house. We are three miles from Stowey, and not two miles from the sea. Wherever we turn we have woods, smooth downs, and valleys with small brooks running down them, through green meadows; hardly ever intersected with hedgerows, but scattered over with trees. The hills that cradle these valleys are either covered with fern and bilberries, or oak woods, which are cut for charcoal. . . . Walks extend for miles over the hill-tops; the great

beauty of which is their wild simplicity : they are perfectly smooth, without rocks.

“ The Tor of Glastonbury is before our eyes during more than half of our walk to Stowey ; and in the park, wherever we go, keeping about fifteen yards above the house, it makes a part of our prospect.”

CHAPTER IV.

RESIDENCE AT ALFOXDEN.—REMOVAL TO GRASMERE.

THE year succeeding the time when Miss Wordsworth and her brother became resident at Alfoxden was one of glowing enjoyment and fruitful industry. We are not without a few pleasing pictures of this charmed primitive period of their lives—its profitable intercourse, its delightful rambles.

“ Upon smooth Quantock’s airy ridge we roamed,
Unchecked, or loitered ’mid his sylvan combs ;
Thou, in bewitching words with happy heart,
Didst chant the vision of that ancient man,
The bright-eyed mariner ; and rueful woes
Didst utter of the Lady Christabel—
And I, associate with such labours, steeped
In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours,
Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found
After the perils of his moonlight ride,
Near the loud waterfall ; or her who sate
In misery near the miserable thorn.”

We can imagine the happy meetings and rapturous feelings of the two young poets in the company of the bright young woman, who was gifted with a no less poetic soul, wandering amid the delightful scenery of Somersetshire, revelling in the beauties of woodland and

ocean, and the pleasant evenings, when each read to the other his growing poems; and they together discussed their ambitious schemes for the golden future, receiving the suggestions and approval of the ever-sympathetic sister and friend. Wordsworth has described this as a "very pleasant and productive time" of his life.

It was during one of the short tours of Wordsworth and Coleridge, with the bright and faithful Dorothy by their side, inspiring and stimulating (the expenses of which tour they desired to defray by writing a poem), that the story of "The Ancient Mariner" was conceived. Wordsworth has said of it in a passage oft-repeated:—

"In the autumn of 1797, Mr. Coleridge, my sister, and myself, started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon, with a view of visiting Linton and the valley of stones near it; and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem, to be sent to the new Monthly Magazine. In the course of this walk was planned the poem of 'The Ancient Mariner,' founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend, Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention; but certain parts I suggested. For example, some crime to be committed, which was to bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. I had been reading in 'Shelvocke's Voyages,' a day or two before, that, while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude—the largest sort of sea-fowl,

some extending their wings 12 or 13 feet. Suppose, said I, you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime. The incident was thought fitting for the purpose, and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead man ; but I do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem."

It was about this time that the Wordsworths made the acquaintance of Hazlitt. He was then staying with Coleridge, who took him over to Alfoxden. Of this visit Hazlitt says :—

"Wordsworth himself was from home ; but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast ; and we had free access to her brother's poems, the lyrical ballads, which were still in manuscript, or in the form of sybilline leaves. I dipped into a few of these with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room, with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family portraits, of the age of George I. and II., and from the woody declivity of the adjoining park that overlooked my window, at the dawn of day,

‘Heard the loud stag speak.’

"Next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we strolled out into the park, and, seating ourselves on the trunk of an old ash tree, that stretched along the ground, Coleridge read aloud, with a sonorous and musical voice, the ballad of ‘Betty Foy.’ I was not critically or sceptically inclined. I saw touches of truth and nature, and

took the rest for granted. But in 'The Thorn,' 'The Mad Mother,' and 'The Complaint of the Poor Indian Woman,' I felt that deeper power and pathos, which have been since acknowledged,

'In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,'

as the characteristics of this author, and the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry, came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or of the first welcome breath of spring,

'While yet the trembling year is unconfirmed.'

"Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey that evening, and his voice sounded high,

'Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;
Fixt fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,'

as we passed through the echoing groves, by fairy stream or waterfall, gleaming in the solemn moonlight. We went over to Alfoxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the story of 'Peter Bell' in the open air. There is a *chant* in the recitation, both of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making habitual use of this ambiguous accompaniment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animated, and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained, and internal. Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copsewood, whereas Words-

worth always composed walking up and down a straight gravel walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruptions. Returning the same evening, I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth, while Coleridge was explaining the different notes of the nightingale to his sister, in which we neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible."

This year was also celebrated by an introduction to Charles Lamb (the quaint and gentle-hearted "Elia") and his excellent sister Mary. Lamb was an old schoolfellow, and a close friend of Coleridge. They had been boys together at the Christ's Hospital, where the sympathy between them had been formed which became a life-long bond. A short emancipation from the toils of the East India House found Lamb and his sister spending a little time with Coleridge at Nether Stowey. From the time of the commencement of the acquaintance of Mary Lamb and Dorothy Wordsworth in this manner, their friendship was constant and their correspondence frequent. While, in temperament, they were totally unlike each other, there was that in the tenor of their lives, in the tender and helpful devotion of each of them to her brother—a devotion in both cases so warmly reciprocated—together with much in common in their tastes and pursuits, which served to cement a friendship begun under such pleasurable circumstances.

The poem "To my Sister," written in front of Alfoxden, is suggestive of the happy rural life at this time enjoyed by the poet and his sister. What lover

of Wordsworth does not remember how on “the first mild day of March,” when, to the receptive spirit of the poet, each minute of the advancing, balmy day appeared to be lovelier than the preceding one, while, sauntering on the lawn, he wrote, desiring her to hasten with her household morning duties, and share his enjoyment of the genial sunshine?

“It is the first mild day of March :
Each minute sweeter than before
The red-breast sings from the tall larch
That stands beside our door.

“There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

“ ‘ My sister ! (’tis a wish of mine),
Now that our morning meal is done,
Make haste, your morning task resign ;
Come forth and feel the sun.

“ ‘ Edward will come with you—and, pray,
Put on with speed your woodland dress ;
And bring no book ; for this one day
We’ll give to idleness.

“ ‘ No joyless forms shall regulate
Our living calendar :
We from to-day, my Friend, will date
The opening of the year.

“ ‘ Love, now a universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth ;
—It is the hour of feeling.

“ ‘ One moment now may give us more
Than years of toiling reason :
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.

“ ‘ Some silent laws our hearts will make,
Which they shall long obey ;
We for the year to come may take
Our temper from to-day.

“ ‘ And from the blessed power that rolls
About, below, above,
We’ll frame the measure of our souls :
They shall be tuned to love.

“ ‘ Then come, my Sister ! come, I pray,
With speed put on your woodland dress ;
And bring no book : for this one day
We’ll give to idleness.’ ”

It was also during their residence at Alfoxden that Miss Wordsworth and her brother made their tour on the banks of the Wye, so signally memorialised in his famous lines on Tintern Abbey, of which he says, no poem of his was composed under circumstances more pleasant for him to remember. Its elevating reflections and rhythmic strains take captive the affections of the lover of Nature, and linger in his memory like the music of youth. In

this place our interest in it arises from the allusions it contains to his beloved companion. He refers to the sweet sensations which, in hours of weariness in towns and cities, he has owed to the beauteous forms of Nature to which his mind has turned. He calls to memory the time when he had, indeed, loved Nature more passionately, and compares it with his present more mature and thoughtful affection, concluding with a fervid address to her who was by his side, and whose presence imparted an added charm—that of double vision—to every object and feeling ; a sense of blessing shared :—

“ For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river : thou, my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend ; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh ! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister ! And this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her ; 'tis her privilege
Thro' all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy : for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb

Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk ;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee ; and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure ; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies ; oh ! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these, my exhortations ! Nor, perchance,
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together.

Nor wilt thou then forget
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake !”

Although Coleridge was at this time married, his wife does not seem to have entered very warmly into his pursuits—not, indeed, with the same interest that Miss Wordsworth did. It cannot be out of place, since it is a matter of almost common knowledge, to remark that we have in Coleridge one more instance of the many

men of genius who have not been very suitably mated. Mrs. Coleridge did not feel the sympathy in her husband's aims to enable her to take pleasure in their intellectual conversations or perpetual rambles. In both of these Miss Wordsworth delighted. De Quincey, in his uncontrollable propensity to chatter, has taken occasion from this fact to suggest that Mrs. Coleridge resented the familiar friendship of the poetic trio. Although not mentioning Miss Wordsworth by name, he refers to a young lady who became a neighbour and a daily companion of Coleridge's walks, and who was "intellectually much superior to Mrs. Coleridge," in a way that shows that none other than Miss Wordsworth could be alluded to. He adds: "Mrs. Coleridge, not having the same relish for long walks or rural scenery, and their residence being at this time in a very sequestered village, was condemned to a daily renewal of this trial. Accidents of another kind embittered it still further. Often it would happen that the walking party returned drenched with rain; in which case the young lady, with a laughing gaiety, and evidently unconscious of any liberty that she was taking, or any wound that she was inflicting, would run up to Mrs. Coleridge's wardrobe, array herself, without leave asked, in Mrs. Coleridge's dresses, and make herself merry with her own unceremoniousness and Mrs. Coleridge's gravity. In all this she took no liberty that she would not most readily have granted in return; she confided too unthinkingly in what she regarded as the natural privileges of friendship; and as little thought that she had been receiving or exacting a favour as, under an exchange of their

relative positions, she would have claimed to confer one." Although De Quincey states that the feelings of Mrs. Coleridge were moderated by the consideration of the kind-heartedness of the young lady, that she was always attended by her brother, and that mere intellectual sympathies in reference to literature and natural scenery associated them, it is to be regretted that the perfectly innocent friendship should have been the cause of this small gossip, a thing in which De Quincey rather delighted, and which sometimes mars the pleasurable-ness of his otherwise felicitous recollections. He was not at this time acquainted either with Coleridge or the Wordsworths, and the information could only have been derived from them during subsequent years of confidential friendship, and not intended for repetition. However it may have appeared to her then, Mrs. Coleridge had in the future much cause to be thankful for the disinterested friendship of Miss Wordsworth.

How conducive to the best interests of her brother at this time was the companionship of Miss Wordsworth, and how complete was his restoration to a healthy and vigorous life after the political distractions of his Continental experience we gather from an allusion in the *Biographia Literaria* of Coleridge. Referring to his life at Nether Stowey, he says : " I was so fortunate as to acquire, shortly after my settlement there, an invaluable blessing in the society of one to whom I could look up with equal reverence, whether I regarded him as a poet, a philosopher, or a man. His conversation extended to almost all subjects, except physics and politics ; with the latter he never troubled himself."

The residence of Miss Wordsworth and her poet brother at Alfoxden, was terminated by circumstances which serve to illustrate at once something of the political attitude of the times, and also of the mental condition of their rustic neighbours in Somersetshire. Coleridge tells an amusing story how he and Wordsworth were followed and watched in their rambles by a person who was suspected to be a spy on their proceedings employed by the Government of the day. Whether this be well founded or not, the mere fact of two men living in their midst, without any apparent object, appears to have rather discomposed their neighbours. Why should they be continually spending their time in taking long and apparently purposeless rambles, engaged in earnest conversation? It was inconceivable that any one should walk a few miles in the light of the moon merely to look at the sea! They must be engaged in smuggling, or have other nefarious designs. In connection with this subject, there is one good story told. Some country gentlemen of the neighbourhood happened to be in the company of a party who were discussing the question whether Wordsworth and Coleridge might be traitors, and in correspondence with the French Administration, when one of them answered: "Oh! as to that Coleridge, he is a rattlebrain that will say more in a week than he will stand to in a twelve-month. But Wordsworth, he is the traitor. Why, bless you! he is so close that you'll never hear him open his lips on the subject from year's end to year's end." The public belief in the absurd theory of Wordsworth's traitorous designs was, however, sufficient to induce the

owner of the mansion in which he lived to put an end to the occupation.

The reputation of his friends and visitors suffered with his. In allusion to this, Mr. Howitt says : "The grave and moral Wordsworth, the respectable Wedgewoods, the correct Robert Southey, and Coleridge, dreaming of glorious intellectualities beyond the moon, were set down for a very disreputable gang. Innocent Mrs. Coleridge and poor Dolly Wordsworth were seen strolling about with them, and were pronounced no better than they should be. Such was the character that they unconsciously acquired that Wordsworth was at length actually driven out of the country."

It may not be out of place to repeat here Mr. Cottle's version of the affair. He says : "Mr. Wordsworth had taken the Alfoxden house, near Stowey, for one year (during the minority of the heir), and the reason why he was refused a continuance by the ignorant man who had the letting of it arose, as Mr. Coleridge informed me, from a whimsical cause, or rather a series of causes. The wiseacres of the village had, it seemed, made Mr. Wordsworth the subject of their serious conversation. One said that he had seen him wandering about by night and look rather strange at the moon ! And then he roamed over the hills like a partridge ! Another said he had heard him mutter, as he walked, in some outlandish brogue that nobody could understand ! Another said : 'It is useless to talk, Thomas. I think he is what people call a wise man (a conjurer).' Another said : 'You are every one of you wrong. I know what he is. We have all met him tramping away toward the sea.

Would any man in his senses take all that trouble to look at a parcel of water? I think he carries on a snug business in the smuggling line, and in these journeys is on the look-out for some *wet* cargo!’ Another very significantly said: ‘I know that he has got a private still in his cellar; for I once passed his house at a little better than a hundred yards’ distance, and I could smell the spirits as plain as an ashen faggot at Christmas!’ Another said, ‘However that was, he was surely a desperd (desperate) French Jacobin; for he is so silent and dark that nobody ever heard him say one word about politics!’ And thus these ignoramuses drove from their village a greater ornament than will ever again be found amongst them.”

After leaving Alfoxden, in the autumn of 1798, Miss Wordsworth accompanied her brother during a residence of six months in Germany, their chief object being the attainment of a knowledge of the language. Although, from the absence of society at Goslar, where they were, they do not seem to have been fortunately circumstanced in this respect, Wordsworth was, according to his sister, very industrious, and here composed several poems.

Their life in Germany was not altogether without adventure. Mr. Howitt gives an account of an incident related to him by the poet of his arriving late one evening, accompanied by Miss Wordsworth and Coleridge, at a hamlet in Hesse Cassel, where they were unable to gain admittance to the inn, and feared having to pass the night in the open street. A continued knocking at the inhospitable doors only brought out the landlord

armed with a huge cudgel, with which he began to beat them. Regardless of their personal danger, and thinking of their female companion, to whom the prospect of an inclement night in the open air was by no means cheering, Wordsworth and his friend managed, after warding off the blows of the cudgel, to force their way into the house, and by reasoning with the surly landlord, and appealing to his better feelings, induced him to afford them a scanty lodging for the night. It appears that strangers travelling in these remote parts at this time received scant courtesy, even from those professing to provide them with entertainment, and that personal violence and plunder were not unfrequently resorted to.

On returning to England in the spring of 1799, Wordsworth, after spending some months with friends at Sockburn-on-Tees, wisely determined to have a fixed place of abode for himself, and, of course, his sister; eventually selecting that spot which is more than all others associated with his name and memory. A walking tour in company with his friend Coleridge in Westmoreland and Cumberland, resulted in his fixing upon Grasmere as the future home of himself and his faithful sister. To this place they accordingly repaired, walking a considerable part of the way—that from Wensleydale to Kendal—“accomplishing as much as twenty miles in a day over uneven roads, frozen into rocks, in the teeth of a keen wind and a driving snow,” amid the crisp and biting blasts of a winter day, arriving at Grasmere—so long the scene of their future labours and rambles—on the shortest day of the last year in the last century.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAKE DISTRICT.

THE lake and mountain district of England, which has now become so famous, was happily chosen by these children of Nature as their residence. Born as they both were on its outskirts, they had long been familiar with its beauties, and the only matter for surprise is that they had not earlier turned their faces to their native hills instead of spending some intervening years elsewhere.

No region could have been more in harmony with their sympathies and pursuits. The hardy inhabitants of these dales, and the simplicity of their lives and manners, formed fitting objects of study and reflection for the single-minded poet of Nature, who came to live and die amongst them. It is quite unnecessary, in these days of travel and of guide-books, which have done so much to make the district familiar ground, to give any description of it. It may not, however, be out of place to quote an extract or two from Wordsworth's own Description of the lakes. Referring to the aspect of the district at different seasons of the year, he says :—" It has been said that in human life there are moments worth ages. In a more subdued tone of sympathy may we affirm that in the climate of England there are, for the lover of Nature, days which are worth whole months—I might

say even years. One of these favoured days sometimes occurs in spring-time, when that soft air is breathing over the blossoms and new-born verdure which inspired Buchanan with his beautiful 'Ode to the First of May'; the air which, in the luxuriance of his fancy, he likens to that of the golden age—to that which gives motion to the funereal cypresses on the banks of Lethe; to the air which is to salute beatified spirits when expiatory fires shall have consumed the earth, with all her habitations. But it is in autumn that days of such affecting influence most frequently intervene. The atmosphere becomes refined, and the sky rendered more crystalline, as the vivifying heat of the year abates; the lights and shadows are more delicate; the colouring is richer and more finely harmonised; and, in this season of stillness, the ear being unoccupied, or only gently excited, the sense of vision becomes more susceptible of its appropriate enjoyments. A resident in a country like this we are treating of will agree with me that the presence of a lake is indispensable to exhibit in perfection the beauty of one of these days; and he must have experienced, while looking on the unruffled waters, that the imagination by their aid is carried into recesses of feeling otherwise impenetrable. The reason of this is that the heavens are not only brought down into the bosom of the earth, but that the earth is mainly looked at, and thought of, through the medium of a purer element. The happiest time is when the equinoctial gales are departed; but their fury may probably be called to mind by the sight of a few shattered boughs, whose leaves do not differ in colour from the faded

foliage of the stately oaks from which these relics of the storm depend; all else speaks of tranquillity; not a breath of air, no restlessness of insects, and not a moving object perceptible, except the clouds gliding in the depth of the lake, or the traveller passing along, an inverted image, whose motion seems governed by the quiet of a time to which its archetype, the living person, is perhaps insensible; or it may happen that the figure of one of the larger birds—a raven or a heron—is crossing silently among the reflected clouds, while the voice of the real bird, from the element aloft, gently awakens in the spectator the recollection of appetites and instincts, pursuits and occupations, that deform and agitate the world, yet have no power to prevent Nature from putting on an aspect capable of satisfying the most intense cravings for the tranquil, the lovely, and the perfect, to which man, the noblest of her creatures, is subject.”

His description of the Cumbrian cottages—

“ Clustered like stars some few, but single most,
And lurking dimly in their shy retreats,
Or glancing on each other cheerful looks,
Like separated stars with clouds between—”

is exceedingly happy.

“ The dwelling-houses and contiguous outhouses are, in many instances, of the colour of the native rock, out of which they have been built; but frequently the dwelling or fire-house, as it is ordinarily called, has been distinguished from the barn or byre by rough-cast and whitewash, which, as the inhabitants are not hasty in

renewing it, in a few years acquires, by the influence of weather, a tint at once sober and variegated. As these houses have been, from father to son, inhabited by persons engaged in the same occupations, yet necessarily with changes in their circumstances, they have received without incongruity additions and accommodations adapted to the needs of each successive occupant, who, being for the most part proprietor, was at liberty to follow his own fancy ; so that these humble dwellings remind the contemplative spectator of a production of Nature, and may (using a strong expression) rather be said to have grown than to have been erected—to have risen, by an instinct of their own, out of the native rock—so little is there of formality, such is their wildness and beauty. Among the numerous recesses and projections in the walls, and in the different stages of their roofs, are seen bold and harmonious effects of contrasted sunshine and shadow. It is a favourable circumstance that the strong winds which sweep down the valleys induced the inhabitants, at a time when the materials for building were easily procured, to furnish many of these dwellings with substantial porches ; and such as have not this defence are seldom unprovided with a projection of two large slates over their thresholds. Nor will the singular beauty of the chimneys escape the eye of the attentive traveller. Sometimes a low chimney, almost upon a level with the roof, is overlaid with a slate, supported upon four slender pillars, to prevent the wind from driving the smoke down the chimney. Others are of a quadrangular shape, rising one or two feet above the roof ; which low

square is often surmounted by a tall cylinder, giving to the cottage chimney the most beautiful shape in which it is ever seen. Nor will it be too fanciful or refined to remark that there is a pleasing harmony between a tall chimney of this circular form, and the living column of smoke, ascending from it through the still air. These dwellings, mostly built, as has been said, of rough unhewn stone, are roofed with slates, which were rudely taken from the quarry before the present art of splitting them was understood ; and are, therefore, rough and uneven in their surface, so that both the coverings and sides of the houses have furnished places of rest for the seeds of lichens, mosses, ferns, and flowers. Hence buildings, which in their very form call to mind the processes of Nature, do thus, clothed in part with a vegetable garb, appear to be received into the bosom of the living principle of things, as it acts and exists among the woods and fields ; and, by their colour and their shape, affectingly direct the thoughts to that tranquil course of Nature and simplicity, along which the humble-minded inhabitants have, through so many generations been led. Add the little garden with its shed for beehives, its small bed of pot-herbs, and its borders and patches of flowers for Sunday posies, with sometimes a choice few too much prized to be plucked ; an orchard of proportioned size ; a cheese-press, often supported by some tree near the door ; a cluster of embowering sycamores for summer shade ; with a tall fir through which the winds sing when other trees are leafless ; the little rill, or household spout, murmuring in all seasons ; combine these incidents and

images together, and you have the representative idea of a mountain cottage in this country so beautifully formed in itself, and so richly adorned by the hand of Nature.

“Till within the last sixty years* there was no communication between any of these vales by carriage-roads; all bulky articles were transported on pack-horses. Owing, however, to the population not being concentrated in villages, but scattered, the valleys themselves were intersected, as now, by innumerable lanes and pathways leading from house to house and from field to field. These lanes, where they are fenced by stone walls, are mostly bordered with ashes, hazels, wild roses, and beds of tall fern, at their base; while the walls themselves, if old, are overspread with mosses, small ferns, wild strawberries, the geranium, and lichens; and if the wall happen to rest against a bank of earth, it is sometimes almost wholly concealed by a rich facing of stone-fern. It is a great advantage to a traveller or resident, that these numerous lanes and paths, if he be a zealous admirer of Nature, will lead him on into all the recesses of the country, so that the hidden treasures of its landscapes may, by an ever-ready guide, be laid open to his eyes.”

A much more recent writer, Mrs. E. Lynn Linton, in her charming work, full of graceful description and exquisite poetry, thus writes of the scenery of one of the lakes after a storm :—

“The woods glittered and sparkled in the sun, each dripping branch a spray of golden light, and the light

* This was written in 1810.

was married to the loud music of the birds flowing out in rivulets of song. Countless flies shot through the air, and vibrated on the water ; and the fish leaped up to catch them, dimpling the shining surface with concentric ripples, and throwing up small jets of light in the smooth black bays. Every crag and stone, and line of wall, and tuft of gorse, was visible on the nearer hills, where the colouring was intense and untranslatable ; and on the more distant mountains, we could see, as through a telescope, the scars on the steeps, the slaty shingles, and the straight cleavings down the sides, the old grey watercourses, threaded now like a silver line—those silver lines, after the storm, over all the craggy faces everywhere ; we could see each green knoll set like an island among the grey boulders, each belt of mountain wood, each purple rift, each shadowed pass, slope and gully, and ghyll and scaur—we could count them all glistening in the sun, or clear and tender in the shade ; while the sky was of a deep, pure blue above, and the cumulus clouds were gathered into masses white and dazzling as marble, and almost as solid-looking.

“ And over all, and on all, and lying in the heart of everything, warming, creating, fashioning the dead matter into all lovely forms, and driving the sweet juices like blood through the veins of the whole of earth, shone the glad sun, free, boundless, loving—life of the world’s life, glory of its glory, shaper and creator of its brightest beauty. Silver on the lake, gold in the wood, purple over the hills, white and lazuli in the heavens—what infinite splendour hanging through this narrow

valley ! What a wealth of love and beauty pouring out for the heart of all Nature, and for the diviner soul of man ! ”

Of the mountain tarns, which in their solitary grandeur gleam like diamonds, she writes :—

“It is very lovely to watch the ripple of a tarn : a wonderful lesson in wave curvature, if small in scale, yet as true as the wildest ocean storm could give. Ever changing in line, and yet so uniform in law, the artist and the hydrographer might learn some valuable truths from half a day’s study of one of these small mountain sheets of water. Now the broad, smooth, silky curves flow steadily across ; now a fine network spreads over these, and again another network, smaller and finer still, breaks up the rest into a thousand fragments ; then the tarn bursts out into tiny silver spangles, like a girl’s causeless laughter ; and then comes a grey sweep across the water, as if it shivered in the wind ; and then again all subsides, and the long, silky flow sets in again, with quiet shadows and play of green and grey in the transparent shallows. It is like a large diamond set in emerald ; for the light of the water is radiance simply, not colour ; and the grass, with the sun striking through, is as bright as an emerald.”

If one more extract from Mrs. Linton may be culled, it is to the following reflections that a day spent on Helvellyn gives rise :—

“Ah ! what a world lies below ! But grand as it is on the earth, it is mated by the grandeur of the sky. For the cloud scenery is of such surpassing nobleness while it lasts, and before it is drawn up into one volume

of intensest blue, that no kind or manner of discord mars the day's power and loveliness. Of all forms and of all colours are those gracious summer clouds, ranging from roseate flakes of dazzling white masses and torn black remnants, like the last fragments of a widow's weeds thrust aside for her maturer bridal; from solid substances, firm and marble-like, to light baby curls set like pleasant smiles about the graver faces: words and pictures, in all their changes, unspeakably precious to soul and sense. And when, finally, they all gather themselves away, and leave the sky a vault of undimmed blue, and leave the earth a gorgeous picture of human industry and dwelling—when field and plain, and mountain and lake, and tarn and river are fashioned into the beauty of a primeval earth by the purity of the air and the governing strength of the sun and the fragrant sweetness of the summer, and when the very gates of heaven seem opening for our entering where the southern sun stands at gaze in his golden majesty—is it wonder if there are tears more glad than many smiles, and a thrill of love more prayerful than many a litany chanted in the church service? In the very passion of delight that pours like wine through the veins is a solemn outfall—in the very deliciousness of joy an intensity that is almost pain. It is all so solemn and so grand, so noble and so loving, surely we cannot be less than what we live in!

“Let any one haunted by small cares, by fears worse than cares, and by passions worse than either, go up on a mountain height on such a summer's day as this, and there confront his soul with the living soul of Nature.

Will the stately solitude not calm him? Can the nobleness of beauty not raise him to like nobleness? Is there no Divine voice for him in the absolute stillness? No loving hand guiding through the pathless wilds? No tenderness for man in the lavishness of Nature? Have the clouds no lesson of strength in their softness? the sun no cheering in its glory? Has the earth no hymn in all its living murmur? the air no shaping in its clearness? the wind no healing in its power? Can he stand in the midst of that great majesty the sole small thing, and shall his spirit, which should be the noblest thing of all, let itself be crippled by self and fear, till it lies crawling on the earth when its place is lifting to the heavens? Oh! better than written sermon or spoken exhortation is one hour on the lonely mountain tops, when the world seems so far off, and God and His angels so near. Into the Temple of Nature flows the light of the Shekinah, pure and strong and holy, and they are wisest who pass into it oftenest, and rest within its glory longest. There was never a church more consecrated to all good ends than the stone waste on Helvellyn top, where you sit beneath the sun and watch the bright world lying in radiant peace below, and the quiet and sacred heavens above."

Probably there is no spot of English ground to which more pilgrimages have, during the last half-century, been made than the vale of Grasmere, which has for all time been rendered classic by the residence therein of Wordsworth and those sons of genius who loved to gather around him; and almost every prominent object and scene in which has been immortalised by his pen.

To lovers of his poetry the spirit of Wordsworth yet casts a spell over the landscape ; and mountain and vale and lake are almost as articulate to the hearing ear as are the storied stones of Rome. But Life's grandest music is audible only to the ready ear. It is to the "inward eye" of love, gathering its treasured harvest, that the brightest halo is revealed. Earth may be

"Crammed with heaven,"—

"But only he who sees takes off his shoes."

As Nature whispers her secrets to her true lovers ; so it is to the searching eye that the historic pile presents a vision of years, and the decaying cottage or hoary mountain speak of those who consecrated its stones or roamed beneath its shade.

Apart, however, from the interest which attaches to this locality from its many cherished associations, it is of unsurpassed beauty and loveliness. The scenery of this favoured district, so pleasingly varied as to inspire at once with gladness and awe, to thrill with rapture or to charm into repose, culminates in the transcendent loveliness of the mountain-guarded vale of Grasmere. It takes captive the affections like the features of a familiar friend.

The poet Gray, writing concerning it more than a century ago, says : "Passed by the little chapel of Wiborn [Wythburn], out of which the Sunday congregation were then issuing. Passed by a beck near Dunmail Raise, and entered Westmoreland a second time ; now began to see Helm crag, distinguished from its rugged neighbours, not so much by its height, as by

the strange, broken outline of its top, like some gigantic building demolished, and the stones that composed it flung across each other in wild confusion. Just beyond it opens one of the sweetest landscapes that Art ever attempted to imitate. 'The bosom of the mountains here spreading into a broad basin, discovers in the midst Grasmere Water ; its margin is hollowed into small bays, with eminences, some of rock, some of soft turf, that half conceal and half vary the figure of the little lake they command. From the shore a low promontory pushes itself into the water, and on it stands a white village, with a parish church rising in the midst of it, having enclosures, cornfields, and meadows, green as an emerald, which, with trees, and hedges, and cattle, fill up the whole space from the edge of the water, and just opposite to you is a large farmhouse at the bottom of a steep, smooth lawn, embosomed in old woods, which climb half way up the mountain sides, and discover above a broken line of crags that crown the scene. Not a single red tile, no staring gentleman's house breaks in upon the repose of this unsuspected paradise ; but all is peace, rusticity, and happy poverty, in its sweetest, most becoming attire.'

This description must, of course, at the present day be somewhat modified. The scene upon which the eyes of the author of the *Elegy* rested is now varied by many residences and signs of human contact then absent.

In an account of a visit to Grasmere at a much later period, the late Nathaniel Hawthorne says : " This little town seems to me as pretty a place as ever I met with in my life. It is quite shut in by hills that rise up

immediately around it, like a neighbourhood of kindly giants. These hills descend steeply to the verge of the level on which the village stands, and there they terminate at once, the whole site of the little town being as even as a floor. I call it a village, but it is no village at all ; all the dwellings stand apart, each in its own little domain, and each, I believe, with its own little lane leading to it, independently of the rest. Many of these are old cottages, plastered white, with antique porches, and roses, and other vines, trained against them, and shrubbery growing about them, and some are covered with ivy. There are a few edifices of more pretension and of modern build, but not so strikingly as to put the rest out of countenance. The Post Office, when we found it, proved to be an ivied cottage, with a good deal of shrubbery round it, having its own pathway, like the other cottages. The whole looks like a real seclusion, shut out from the great world by those encircling hills, on the sides of which, whenever they are not too steep, you see the division lines of property and tokens of cultivation—taking from them their pretensions of savage majesty, but bringing them nearer to the heart of man.”

“ Only a sister’s part—yes, that was all ;
And yet her life was bright, and full, and free.
She did not feel, ‘ I give up all for him ; ’
She only knew, ‘ ’Tis mine his friend to be.’
“ So what she saw and felt the poet sang—
She did not seek the world should know her share ;
Her one great hunger was for ‘ William’s ’ fame,
To give his thoughts a voice her life-long prayer.
“ And when with wife and child his days were crowned
She did not feel that she was left alone,
Glad in their joy, she shared their every care,
And only thought of baby as ‘ our own.’
“ His ‘ dear, dear sister,’ that was all she asked,
Her gentle ministry, her only fame ;
But when we read his page with grateful heart,
Between the lines we’ll spell out Dora’s name.

—ANON. IN *The Spectator*.

CHAPTER VI.

LIFE AT GRASMERE.

THE unpretentious cottage which became the first Grasmere home of Wordsworth and his sister in those days when they were still sole companions, though changed in its surroundings, is happily still allowed to retain its old features. It stands on the right of the highway, just on the entry into Grasmere, on the road from Rydal—the old coach road—a little distance beyond the “Wishing Gate,” and at the part of the village called Town End. It was formerly an inn, called “The Dove and Olive Bough,” and is still known by the name of Dove Cottage. It overlooks from the front the beauteous lake of Grasmere, though the view from the lower rooms is now considerably obstructed by buildings since erected. Behind is a small garden and orchard, in which is a spring of pure water, round which the primroses and daffodils bloom, as they did when lovingly reared by Miss Wordsworth. A dozen steps or so, cut in the rocky slope lead up to a little terrace walk, on a bit of mountain ground, enclosed in the domain, and sheltered in the rear by a fir-clad wood. Altogether it was an ideal cottage-home for the enthusiastic young couple. From the orchard are obtained views almost unrivalled

of mountain, vale, and lake, embracing the extensive range from Helm Crag and the vales of Easdale and Wythburn, down to the wooded heights of Loughrigg. Words cannot do justice to the idyllic sweetness and beauty of this poet's home, as it must have been when Wordsworth described his chosen retreat as the

“ Loveliest spot that man hath ever found.”

The “sweet garden-orchard, eminently fair,” has now, however, a neglected appearance, and must be very different from the time when the loving hands of the poet and his sister carefully tended the trees and flowers, of which he says :—

“ This plot of orchard ground is ours,
My trees they are, my sister's flowers.”

De Quincey speaks of the house as being immortal in his remembrance—just two bow shots from the water—“a little white cottage, gleaming in the midst of trees, with a vast and seemingly never-ending series of ascents rising above it, to the height of more than three thousand feet.”

Wordsworth's satisfaction at finding himself, at length, in the companionship of his beloved sister, in this his first permanent and peaceful abode, is thus expressed in a portion of a poem which was intended to form part of the “Recluse,” of which, as is well known, the Prelude and the Excursion only were completed. I am indebted for the extract to the “Memoirs of Wordsworth,” by the late Bishop of Lincoln. It will be observed that the poet's ardent attachment to

his sister was in no degree abated, and that he ungrudgingly bestowed upon her the generous praise so much merited :—

“ On Nature’s invitation do I come,
By Reason sanctioned. Can the choice mislead,
That made the calmest, fairest spot on earth,
With all its unappropriated good,
My own, and not mine only, for with me
Entrenched—say rather, peacefully embowered—
Under yon orchard, in yon humble cot,
A younger orphan of a home extinct,
The only daughter of my parents dwells ;
Aye, think on that, my heart, and cease to stir ;
Pause upon that, and let the breathing frame
No longer breathe, but all be satisfied.
Oh, if such silence be not thanks to God
For what hath been bestowed, then where, where then
Shall gratitude find rest ? Mine eyes did ne’er
Fix on a lovely object, nor my mind
Take pleasure in the midst of happy thought,
But either she, whom now I have, who now
Divides with me that loved abode, was there,
Or not far off. Where’er my footsteps turned,
Her voice was like a hidden bird that sang ;
The thought of her was like a flash of light
Or an unseen companionship, a breath
Or fragrance independent of the wind.
In all my goings, in the new and old
Of all my meditations, and in this
Favourite of all, in this, the most of all. . . .

Embrace me, then, ye hills, and close me in.
Now, on the clear and open day I feel
Your guardianship : I take it to my heart ;
'Tis like the solemn shelter of the night.
But I would call thee beautiful ; for mild
And soft, and gay, and beautiful thou art,
Dear valley, having in thy face a smile,
Though peaceful, full of gladness. Thou art pleased,
Pleased with thy crags, and woody steeps, thy lake,
Its one green island, and its winding shores,
The multitude of little rocky hills,
Thy church, and cottages of mountain stone
Clustered like stars some few, but single most
And lurking dimly in their shy retreats,
Or glancing at each other cheerful looks
Like separated stars with clouds between."

The early years of their residence at Grasmere were signalised by calm enjoyment, no less than by active industry. Miss Wordsworth's life retained its characteristic unselfishness, its devoted ministry. The cottage itself was furnished at a cost of about £100—a legacy left to her by a relative, and their joint annual income at that time amounted to about as much. That they were still poor did not detract from their happiness, but probably served only to promote it. We find this refined, sensitive young woman (she was now twenty-eight), engaged very much in domestic duties, doing a considerable part of the work of the house, without a thought of discontent. Her poetic enthusiasm and cultured mind did not unfit her for the common duties

of life, or detract from her high sense of duty and service. Happily she had learnt—as every true woman does—that there is no degradation in work; that it is not in the nature of our tasks, but the spirit in which they are performed, that the test of fitness is to be found. Notwithstanding, however, her other duties, Miss Wordsworth found time to be a true help to her brother. As his amanuensis she wrote or transcribed his poems, read to him, and accompanied him in his daily walks. She had also that rare gift of the perfect companion of being able to be silent with and for him, recognising the apparently little-known truth that a loved presence is in itself society. In one of his poems, “Personal Talk,” he says:—

“I am not one who much or oft delight
To season my fireside with personal talk,—
Of friends, who live within an easy walk,
Or neighbours, daily, weekly, in my sight :
And, for my chance acquaintance, ladies bright,
Sons, mothers, maidens withering on the stalk,
These all wear out of me, like forms with chalk
Painted on rich men’s floors, for one feast-night.
Better than such discourse doth silence long,
Long, barren silence, square with my desire ;
To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,
In the loved presence of my cottage-fire,
And listen to the flapping of the flame,
Or kettle whispering its faint undersong.”

In one of the MSS. notes, alluding to this sonnet,

Wordsworth has said : "The last line but two stood at first better and more characteristically thus :

" "By my half-kitchen and half-parlour fire," "

And he adds : "My sister and I were in the habit of having the tea-kettle in our little sitting-room ; and we toasted the bread ourselves, which reminds me of a little circumstance, not unworthy of being set down among these *minutiæ*. Happening both of us to be engaged a few minutes one morning, when we had a young prig of a Scotch lawyer to breakfast with us, my dear sister, with her usual simplicity, put the toasting fork, with a slice of bread, into the hands of this Edinburgh genius. Our little book-case stood on one side of the fire. To prevent loss of time he took down a book, and fell to reading, to the neglect of the toast, which was burnt to a cinder. Many a time have we laughed at this circumstance and other cottage simplicities of that day."

Miss Wordsworth, at this period, also kept a diary, or journal, which, we are informed, is "full of vivid descriptions of natural beauty." The few extracts from it which the world has hitherto been allowed to see are of deep interest, affording, as they do, a pleasing picture of their daily occupations, the incidents which gave birth to many of her brother's poems, and the circumstances under which they were written. For the subject of many of them he was indebted to her ever-watchful and observant eye, and several were composed while wandering over woodland paths, by her side. The knowledge of this not only serves to remind us of the

sustained character of Miss Wordsworth's directing and controlling influence upon her brother, but gives an additional interest to the poems. Thus, in her journal, she writes : "William walked to Rydal. . . . The lake of Grasmere beautiful. The Church an image of peace ; he wrote some lines upon it. . . . The mountains indistinct ; the lake calm, and partly ruffled, a sweet sound of water falling into the quiet lake. A storm gathering in Easedale, so we returned ; but the moon came out, and opened to us the church and village. Helm Crag in shade ; the larger mountains dappled like a sky." Again : "We went into the orchard after breakfast, and sat there. The lake calm, the sky cloudy. William began poem on 'The Celandine.'" The next day : "Sowed flower-seeds : William helped me. We sat in the orchard. W. wrote 'The Celandine.' Planned an arbour ; the sun too hot for us." "W. wrote the 'Leech Gatherer.'" These instances might be multiplied. Wordsworth has himself recorded how that about this time he composed his first sonnets, "taking fire" one afternoon after his sister had been reading to him those of Milton. Her helpful aid, as a literary companion, is thus referred to by Mr. Lockhart : "His sister, without any of the aids of learned ladies, had a refined perception of the beauties of literature, and her glowing sympathy and delicate comments cast new light upon the most luminous page. Wordsworth always acknowledged that it was from her and Coleridge that his otherwise very independent intellect had derived great assistance."

In a letter, dated September 10, 1800, Miss Words-

worth thus describes their home and home-life : " We are daily more delighted with Grasmere and its neighbourhood. Our walks are perpetually varied, and we are more fond of the mountains as our acquaintance with them increases. We have a boat upon the lake, and a small orchard, and smaller garden, which, as it is the work of our own hands, we regard with pride and partiality. Our cottage is quite large enough for us, though very small, and we have made it neat and comfortable within doors, and it looks very nice on the outside ; for though the roses and honeysuckles which we have planted against it are only of this year's growth, yet it is covered all over with green leaves and scarlet flowers ; for we have trained scarlet beans upon threads, which are not only exceedingly beautiful but very useful, as their produce is immense. We have made a lodging-room of the parlour below stairs, which has a stone floor, therefore we have covered it all over with matting. We sit in a room above stairs ; and we have one lodging-room, with two single beds, a sort of lumber-room, and a small, low, unceiled room, which I have papered with newspapers, and in which we have put a small bed. Our servant is an old woman of sixty years of age, whom we took partly out of charity. She was very ignorant, very foolish, and very difficult to teach. But the goodness of her disposition, and the great convenience we should find, if my perseverance was successful, induced me to go on."

It is recorded in the transactions of the Wordsworth Society for 1882, that Professor Knight thus alluded to the journals of Miss Wordsworth, written during the

years 1800, 1801, 1802, and 1803 : “ These journals were a singularly interesting record of ‘ plain living and high thinking ; ’—of very plain living, and of very lofty thought, imagination, and feeling. They were the best possible commentary on the poems belonging to that period ; because they shewed the manner of life of the brother and the sister, the character of their daily work, the influences of Nature to which they were subjected, the homeliness of their ways, and the materials on which the poems were based, as well as the sources of their inspiration. One read in these journals the tales of travelling sailors and pedlars who came through the lake country, of gipsy women and beggar boys, which were afterwards, if not immediately, translated into verse. Then the whole scenery of the place and its accessories, the people of Grasmere Vale, Wordsworth’s neighbours and friends, were photographed in that journal. The Church, the lake, its Island, John’s Grove, White Moss Common, Point Rash Judgment, Easedale, Dunmail Raise—everything given in clearest outline and vivid colour. Miss Wordsworth’s delineations of Nature in these daily jottings were quite as subtle and minute, quite as delicate and ethereal, as anything in her brother’s poems. Above all there was in these records a most interesting disclosure of Dorothy Wordsworth’s friendship with Coleridge—and a very remarkable friendship it was. One also saw the sister’s rare appreciation of her brother’s genius, amounting almost to a reverence for it ; and her continuous self-sacrifice that she might foster and develop her brother’s powers. Well might Wordsworth say, ‘ She gave me eyes, she gave me ears.’ Another very

interesting fact disclosed in those journals was the very slow growth of many of the poems, such, for example, as 'Michael' and the 'Excursion,' and the constant revisions to which they were subjected."

The poem, "To a Young Lady, who had been reproached for taking long walks in the country," written about this time, was, I am informed on excellent authority, addressed to Miss Wordsworth. It will be observed that the prophecy therein contained did not in all respects meet with fulfilment :—

"Dear Child of Nature, let them rail !
—There is a nest in a green dale,
A harbour and a hold ;
Where thou, a Wife and Friend, shalt see
Thy own heart-stirring days, and be
A light to young and old.

"There, healthy as a shepherd-boy,
And treading among flowers of joy,
Which at no season fade,
Thou, while thy babes around thee cling,
Shalt shew us how divine a thing
A Woman may be made.

"Thy thoughts and feelings shall not die,
Nor leave thee, when grey hairs are nigh,
A melancholy slave ;
But an old age serene and bright,
And lovely as a Lapland night,
Shall lead thee to thy grave."

Thus were passed, in happy converse and mutual love and help, the three years which intervened between Miss Wordsworth and her brother going to Grasmere, and the marriage of the latter. A tour which they together made on the Continent in 1802 pleasantly varied this period. A sonnet of Wordsworth's composed when on this occasion, they were, in the early morning, passing Westminster Bridge is well known. It is here repeated only that his sister's account of her impressions may be placed along with it. He says :—

“ Earth hath not anything to shew more fair ;
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty ;
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning ; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky ;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill ;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !
The river glideth at his own sweet will :
Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;
And all that mighty heart is lying still ! ”

Miss Wordsworth in her almost equally graceful prose writes : “ Left London between five and six o'clock of the morning, outside the Dover coach. A beautiful morning. The city, St. Paul's, with the river—a multitude of boats—made a beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge ; the houses not overhung by their

clouds of smoke, and were spread out endlessly ; yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a pure light, that there was something like the purity of one of Nature's own grand spectacles." She adds : "Arrived at Calais at four in the morning of July 31st. Delightful walks in the evening ; seeing, far off in the west, the coast of England, like a cloud, crested with Dover Castle, the evening star and the glory of the sky ; the reflections in the water were more beautiful than the sky itself ; purple waves brighter than precious stones for ever melting away upon the sands."

CHAPTER VII.

SOME MEMORIAL NOOKS

IT may not be inopportune to mention, in this place, a few of the spots in the neighbourhood of this, their early home, with which the memory of Miss Wordsworth is more especially associated. By Wordsworth himself, indeed, the whole of the Lake district of England has been immortalised, and is more associated with his name and life than is the country of the Trossachs with that of Sir Walter Scott. In illustration of this it is only necessary to refer to his poems on the naming of places and inscriptions. This fact alone, no less than the exalted teaching and beauty of many of his works, will serve to preserve the memory of Wordsworth; and probably thousands, to whom he would otherwise be only a name, will become acquainted with him as a loved and trusted teacher. If the spirits of the departed ever return and hover over the scenes of earth which were loved and hallowed in the old-world life, it needs no force of the imagination to fancy that of this most spiritual of women, lingering by sunny noon or shady evening near the haunts, where, with her kindred companion, she walked in happy converse. Among such favoured nooks probably the next in interest to their loved "garden-orchard" would be found the beauteous vale of Easedale. Here is a terrace walk in Lancrigg

wood which Wordsworth many years after said he and his sister discovered three days after they took up their abode at Grasmere; and which long remained their favourite haunt. The late Lady Richardson, in an article in "Sharpe's London Magazine," referring at a later period to this place, says : "It was their custom to spend the fine days of summer in the open air, chiefly in the valley of Easedale. The 'Prelude' was chiefly composed in a green mountain terrace, on the Easedale side of Helm Crag, known by the name of Under Lancrigg, a place which he used to say he knew by heart. The ladies sat at their work on the hill-side, while he walked to and fro, on the smooth green mountain turf, humming out his verses to himself, and then repeating them to his sympathising and ready scribes, to be noted down on the spot and transcribed at home."

The winding path leading up to the tarn on the west of Easedale brook, on the other side of the valley, is, perhaps, still more closely identified with Miss Wordsworth. The first of his "Poems on the Naming of Places" was, he has stated, suggested on the banks of the brook that runs through Easedale, by the side of which he had composed thousands of verses. The poem is as follows :—

"It was an April morning : fresh and clear
The Rivulet, delighting in its strength,
Ran with a young man's speed ; and yet the voice
Of waters which the winter had supplied
Was softened down into a vernal tone.

The spirit of enjoyment and desire,
And hopes and wishes, from all living things
Went circling, like a multitude of sounds.
The budding groves seemed eager to urge on
The steps of June ; as if their various hues
Were only hindrances that stood between
Them and their object : but, meanwhile, prevailed
Such an entire contentment in the air
That every naked ash, and tardy tree
Yet leafless, shewed as if the countenance
With which it looked on this delightful day
Were native to the summer.—Up the brook
I roamed in the confusion of my heart,
Alive to all things, and forgetting all.
At length I to a sudden turning came
In this continuous glen, where down a rock
The Stream, so ardent in its course before,
Sent forth such sallies of glad sound that all
Which I till then had heard appeared the voice
Of common pleasure : beast and bird, the lamb,
The shepherd's dog, the linnet and the thrush
Vied with this waterfall, and made a song
Which, while I listened, seemed like the wild growth
Or like some natural produce of the air,
That could not cease to be. Green leaves were here ;
But 'twas the foliage of the rocks—the birch,
The yew, the holly, and the bright green thorn,
With hanging islands of resplendent furze :
And, on a summit, distant a short space,
By any who should look beyond the dell,
A single mountain-cottage might be seen.

I gazed and gazed, and to myself I said,
' Our thoughts at least are ours ; and this wild nook,
MY EMMA, I will dedicate to thee.'
—Soon did the spot become my other home,
My dwelling, and my out-of-doors abode.
And, of the Shepherds who have seen me there,
To whom I sometimes in our idle talk
Have told this fancy, two or three, perhaps,
Years after we are gone and in our graves,
When they have cause to speak of this wild place,
May call it by the name of EMMA'S DELL."

It is hardly necessary to mention that Miss Wordsworth is more than once in the poems referred to as the poet's sister "Emma" or "Emmeline." It is, perhaps, rather difficult to determine on what precise spot they stood when this poem was composed, and to which the name of "Emma's Dell" was given. Professor Knight, in his very interesting work, "The English Lake District, as interpreted by Wordsworth," concludes that the place is where the brook takes a "sudden turning" a few hundred yards above Goody Bridge ; but there are other spots in the brook a little further up the valley to which the description in the poem is probably equally applicable.

Another poem of the same series may appropriately here find a place, containing, as it does, a loving allusion to Dorothy. This time it is Miss Wordsworth herself who gives the name of *William's Peak* to the rugged summit of Stone Arthur, situated between Green Head Ghyll (the scene of Wordsworth's pastoral poem "Michael") and Tongue Ghyll, a short distance on the

right-hand side of the road leading from Grasmere to Keswick :—

“ There is an Eminence,—of these our hills
The last that parleys with the setting sun ;
We can behold it from our orchard-seat ;
And, when at evening we pursue our walk
Along the public way, this Peak, so high
Above us, and so distant in its height,
Is visible ; and often seems to send
Its own deep quiet to restore our hearts.
The meteors make of it a favourite haunt :
The star of Jove, so beautiful and large,
In the mid heavens, is never half so fair
As when he shines above it. ’Tis in truth
The loneliest place we have among the clouds.
*And She who dwells with me, whom I have loved
With such communion, that no place on earth
Can ever be a solitude to me,
Hath to this lonely Summit given my Name.*

As this poem was written in the first year of their residence at Grasmere, the reference in the closing lines can be to no other person than Miss Wordsworth.

Still another poem of the series owes its origin to a walk by the poet, in the company of his sister and Coleridge. The path here referred to, by the side of the lake has, we are informed, lost its privacy and beauty, by reason of the making of the new highway from Rydal to Grasmere :—

“ A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags,
A rude and natural causeway, interposed

Between the water and a winding slope
Of copse and thicket, leaves the eastern shore
Of Grasmere safe in its own privacy :
And there, myself and two beloved Friends,
One calm September morning, ere the mist
Had altogether yielded to the sun,
Sauntered on this retired and difficult way.

—“ Ill suits the road with one in haste ; but we
Played with our time ; and, as we strolled along,
It was our occupation to observe
Such objects as the waves had tossed ashore—
Feather, or leaf, or weed, or withered bough,
Each on the other heaped, along the line
Of the dry wreck. And, in our vacant mood,
Not seldom did we stop to watch some tuft
Of dandelion seed or thistle’s beard,
That skimmed the surface of the dead calm lake,
Suddenly halting now—a lifeless stand !
And starting off again with freak as sudden ;
In all its sportive wanderings, all the while
Making report of an invisible breeze
That was its wings, its chariot, and its horse,
Its playmate, rather say, its moving soul.

—“ And often, trifling with a privilege
Alike indulged to all, we paused, one now,
And now the other, to point out, perchance
To pluck, some flower or water-weed, too fair
Either to be divided from the place
On which it grew, or to be left alone
To its own beauty.”

The poem goes on to relate how they saw in the distance, angling by the margin of the lake, a man in the garb of a peasant, while from the fields the merry noise of the reapers fell upon their ears. They somewhat hastily came to the conclusion that the man was an idler, who, instead of spending his time at the gentle craft, might have been more profitably engaged in the harvest. Upon a near approach they, however, found that he was a feeble old man, wasted by sickness, and too weak to labour, who was doing his best to gain a scanty pittance from the lake. It concludes by alluding to the self-upbraiding of the three friends, in consequence of their too rashly formed opinion :—

“I will not say
What thoughts immediately were ours, nor how
The happy idleness of that sweet morn,
With all its lovely images, was changed
To serious musing and to self-reproach.
Nor did we fail to see within ourselves
What need there is to be reserved in speech,
And temper all our thoughts with charity.
—Therefore, unwilling to forget that day,
My Friend, Myself, and She who then received
The same admonishment, have called the place
By a memorial name, uncouth indeed,
As e’er by mariner was given to bay
Or foreland, on a new-discovered coast ;
And *Point Rash-Judgment* is the name it bears.”

Another memorial of Miss Wordsworth in her prime is to be found in the “Rock of Names,” which stands

on the right-hand side of the road from Grasmere to Keswick, near the head of Thirlmere, and about a mile beyond “Wytheburn’s modest House of Prayer.” This was a meeting-place of Wordsworth and Coleridge, who was then resident at Keswick, and their friends. On the surface of this “upright mural block of stone,” moss-crowned, smooth-faced, and lichen-patched, are cut the following letters :—

W. W.
M. H.
D. W.
S. T. C.
J. W.
S. H.

It is hardly necessary to state that the initials are those of William Wordsworth, Mary Hutchinson (afterwards his wife), Dorothy Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Wordsworth (the poet’s brother), and Sarah Hutchinson (the sister of Mrs. Wordsworth). It is greatly to be regretted that on the completion of the projected reservoir of the Manchester Corporation, this rock, unless steps are taken for its preservation, will be submerged in its waters. Seldom did half-a-dozen more poetic and fervent natures meet and leave a more unique, and attractive memorial. It is to be hoped that means will be adopted not only to have the rock removed to a place of safety, but also to preserve it from further mutilation. Although these initials have withstood the storms and blasts of more than four score

winters, they are yet perfectly distinct and legible, and their original character is preserved. Whilst there are, unfortunately, now other initials and marks upon the face of the rock, it is more free from them than might have been expected. The very fact of attention being called to such an interesting memento, while being a source of pleasure to the admirers of the gifted children of genius who made this their trysting-place, also arouses the puerile ambition of those whose interest centres in themselves, and to whom no associations are dear, to inscribe their own scratch. In this way there has already been added the letter J. before the original D. W. of Miss Wordsworth. Wordsworth's allusion to this rock, in a note to some editions of his poem, "The Waggoner," is as follows :—

ROCK OF NAMES !

“ Light is the strain, but not unjust
To Thee, and thy memorial-trust
That once seemed only to express
Love that was love in idleness ;
Tokens, as year hath followed year,
How changed, alas, in character !
For they were graven on thy smooth breast
By hands of those my soul loved best ;
Meek women, men as true and brave
As ever went to a hopeful grave :
Their hands and mine, when side by side,
With kindred zeal and mutual pride,
We worked until the Initials took
Shapes that defied a scornful look.—

Long as for us a genial feeling
Survives, or one in need of healing,
The power, dear Rock, around thee cast,
Thy monumental power, shall last
For me and mine ! O thought of pain,
That would impair it or profane !

* * * *

And fail not Thou, loved Rock ! to keep
Thy charge when we are laid asleep."

In this place a reference by Wordsworth to his little poem, commencing "Yes, it was the mountain echo," will be of interest. "The echo came from Nab-scar, when I was walking on the opposite side of Rydal Mere. I will here mention, for my dear sister's sake, that while she was sitting alone one day, high up on this part of Loughrigg fell, she was so affected by the voice of the cuckoo, heard from the crags at some distance, that she could not suppress a wish to have a stone inscribed with her name among the rocks from which the sound proceeded."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CIRCLE WIDENED.—MRS. WORDSWORTH.

THE year 1802 was a memorable one to Miss Wordsworth no less than to her brother. With interests so inseparable, the happiness of one was that of the other. After the somewhat agitated period of his early life, when he was for a time in danger of shipwreck, and his noble-hearted sister came to his rescue and helped to steer his course into the placid waters of content and well-grounded hope, Wordsworth was in all respects remarkably fortunate, and his life more than usually serene and happy. Next to the blessing which he possessed in his sister, Wordsworth was largely indebted to his admirable wife. In October of this year he had the good fortune to marry his cousin, Mary Hutchinson, of Penrith—a lady whom it would be almost presumption to “even dare to praise.” As his early friend (and they had in childhood attended the same dame’s school together) they had strong sympathies in common, with, at the same time, much of that contrast of temperament which, in married life, renders one the complement of the other, and contributes not a little to the completion and unity of the dual life. The marriage of those whom “friendship has early paired” can hardly be otherwise than serenely happy ; beginning their life, as they thus do, each with

the same store of early memories, they have a common history into which to engraft their new experiences and hopes. Speaking of his marriage, the poet's nephew says : "It was full of blessings to himself, as ministering to the exercise of his tender affections, in the discipline and delight which married life supplies. The boon bestowed upon him in the marriage union was admirably adapted to shed a cheering and soothing influence upon his mind." In a poem, entitled "A Farewell," Wordsworth has thus expressed the thoughts with which he left his cottage with his sister to bring home the bride and friend :—

"Farewell, thou little Nook of mountain-ground,
 Thou rocky corner in the lowest stair
 Of that magnificent temple which doth bound
 One side of our whole vale with grandeur rare ;
 Sweet garden-orchard, eminently fair,
 The loveliest spot that man hath ever found,
 Farewell !—we leave thee to Heaven's peaceful care,
 Thee, and the Cottage which thou dost surround.

* * * * *

Fields, goods, and far-off chattels we have none :
 These narrow bounds contain our private store
 Of things earth makes, and sun doth shine upon ;
 Here are they in our sight—we have no more.

"Sunshine and shower be with you, bud and bell !
 For two months now in vain we shall be sought ;
 We leave you here in solitude to dwell
 With these our latest gifts of tender thought ;

Thou, like the morning, in thy saffron coat,
Bright gowan, and marsh-marigold, farewell !
Whom from the borders of the Lake we brought,
And placed together near our rocky Well.

“ We go for One to whom ye will be dear ;
And she will prize this Bower, this Indian shed,
Our own contrivance, Building without peer !
—A gentle Maid, whose heart is lowly bred,
Whose pleasures are in wild fields gatherèd,
With joyousness, and with a thoughtful cheer,
Will come to you—to you herself will wed—
And love the blessed life that we lead here.

‘ Dear Spot ! which we have watched with tender heed,
Bringing thee chosen plants and blossoms blown
Among the distant mountains, flower and weed,
Which thou hast taken to thee as thy own,
Making all kindness registered and known ;
Thou for our sakes, though Nature’s child indeed,
Fair in thyself and beautiful alone,
Hast taken gifts which thou dost little need.

* * * * *

“ Help us to tell Her tales of years gone by,
And this sweet spring, the best beloved and best ;
Joy will be flown in its mortality ;
Something must stay to tell us of the rest.
Here, thronged with primroses, the steep rock’s breast
Glittered at evening like a starry sky ;
And in this bush our sparrow built her nest,
Of which I sang one song that will not die.

“Oh happy Garden ! whose seclusion deep
Hath been so friendly to industrious hours ;
And to soft slumbers, that did gently steep
Our spirits, carrying with them dreams of flowers,
And wild notes warbled among leafy bowers ;
Two burning months let summer overleap,
And, coming back with Her who will be ours,
Into thy bosom we again shall creep.”

I cannot refrain from also quoting here the exquisite picture of Mrs. Wordsworth, written after the experience of two years of married life.

“She was a Phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight ;
A lovely Apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament :
Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair,
Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair ;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful Dawn ;
A dancing Shape, an Image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and way-lay.

“I saw her upon nearer view,
A Spirit, yet a Woman too !
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin-liberty ;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet ;
A Creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food ;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

“And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveller between life and death ;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill ;
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command ;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.”

Without the exultant spirits or rare mental endowment of Miss Wordsworth, the poet's wife was eminently fitted for his companionship, one which lasted during the fifty following years. Mr. Lockhart speaks of her as having one of the most benignant tempers that ever diffused peace and cheerfulness through a home. Although not written till some years after, perhaps the present is the most fitting place in which to quote De Quincey's description of Mrs. Wordsworth :*

“I saw sufficiently to be aware of two ladies just entering the room, through a doorway opening upon a little staircase. The foremost, a tallish young woman, with the most winning expression of benignity upon her features, advanced to me, presenting her hand with so frank an air, that all embarrassment must have fled in a moment before the native goodness of her manner. This was Mrs. Wordsworth, cousin of the poet, and, for

* For the copious description here given of Mrs. Wordsworth, and that, on a subsequent page, of Miss Wordsworth, I am indebted to the contributions of De Quincey to “Tait's Edinburgh Magazine,” which afterwards formed part of his collected works.

the last five years or more, his wife. She was now mother of two children, a son and a daughter ; and she furnished a remarkable proof how possible it is for a woman, neither handsome nor even comely, according to the rigour of criticism—nay, generally pronounced very plain—to exercise all the practical fascination of beauty, through the mere compensatory charms of sweetness all but angelic, of simplicity the most entire, womanly self-respect and purity of heart speaking through all her looks, acts, and movements. *Words*, I was going to have added ; but her words were few. In reality, she talked so little, that Mr. Slave-Trade Clarkson used to allege against her, that she could only say, ‘ *God bless you !* ’ Certainly, her intellect was not of an active order ; but, in a quiescent, reposing, meditative way, she appeared always to have a genial enjoyment from her own thoughts ; and it would have been strange, indeed, if she, who enjoyed such eminent advantages of training, from the daily society of her husband and his sister, failed to acquire some power of judging for herself, and putting forth some functions of activity. But, undoubtedly, that was not her element : to feel and to enjoy in a luxurious repose of mind—there was her *forte* and her peculiar privilege ; and how much better this was adapted to her husband’s taste, how much more adapted to uphold the comfort of his daily life, than a blue-stockings loquacity, or even a legitimate talent for discussion, may be inferred from his verses, beginning—

‘ She was a Phantom of delight,
When first she gleamed upon my sight.’

. . . . I will add to this abstract of her *moral* portrait, these few concluding traits of her appearance in a physical sense. Her figure was tolerably good. In complexion she was fair, and there was something peculiarly pleasing even in this accident of the skin, for it was accompanied by an animated expression of health, a blessing which, in fact, she possessed uninterruptedly. Her eyes, the reader may already know, were

‘Like stars of Twilight fair,
Like Twilight, too, her dark brown hair,
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful Dawn.’

Yet strange it is to tell that, in these eyes of vespertine gentleness, there was a considerable obliquity of vision; and much beyond that slight obliquity which is often supposed to be an attractive foible in the countenance: this *ought* to have been displeasing or repulsive; yet, in fact, it was not. Indeed all faults, had they been ten times more and greater, would have been neutralised by that supreme expression of her features, to the unity of which every lineament in the fixed parts, and every undulation in the moving parts of her countenance, concurred, viz., a sunny benignity—a radiant graciousness—such as in this world I never saw surpassed.”

It will be observed that De Quincey here speaks rather slightly of Mrs. Wordsworth’s intellect, almost in such a way as suggests a desire to “damn with faint praise.” Notwithstanding the unique charm of his style and power of language, of which his extensive learning and reading had made him such a master, his pen, even

when portraying his most cherished friends, seems to be slightly touched with an envious venom. That Mrs. Wordsworth's intellect was of no mean order there are in her life abundant traces. The dignified repose and simplicity of her manner, doubtless, formed a striking contrast to that of the impassioned and ardent Dorothy. But it could hardly be other than a lofty intellect that added two of the most exquisite and thoughtful lines to one of the poet's most charming of pieces. Who, having once read, does not remember the lines on the daffodils?—

“ I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils ;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

“ Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay ;
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

“ The waves beside them danced ; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee :
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company :
I gazed, and gazed, but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought ;

“ For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude ;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.”

The lines in italics, suggested by Mrs. Wordsworth, here form the kernel of truth, the central gem around which the lesser beauties are clustered.

What a true “inmate of the heart” the poet’s wife was, and continued to be, to him, we well know. Among other tributes to her soothing and sustaining aid might be mentioned the dedication to her of the “White Doe of Rylstone,” and many other pieces. Happy is the man who, after twenty years of married companionship, can thus write of his wife :—

“ Oh, DEARER far than light and life are dear,
Full oft our human foresight I deplore ;
Trembling, through my unworthiness, with fear
That friends, by death disjoined, may meet no more !

“ Misgivings, hard to vanquish or control,
Mix with the day, and cross the hour of rest ;
While all the future, for thy purer soul,
With ‘sober certainties’ of love is blest,

“ That sigh of thine, not meant for human ear,
Tells that these words thy humbleness offend ;
Yet bear me up—else faltering in the rear
Of a steep march ; support me to the end.

“Peace settles where the intellect is meek,
And Love is dutiful in thought and deed;
Through Thee Communion with that Love I seek :
The faith Heaven strengthens where *He* moulds the
Creed.”

And when many following years had passed over them, and they had together grown old, their love and devotion, which had increased with their years, retained that freshness and fervour of youth which enables aged hearts to rejoice in all things young and beautiful :—

“Morn into noon did pass, noon into eve,
And the old day was welcome as the young,
As welcome, and as beautiful—in sooth
More beautiful, as being a thing more holy :
Thanks to thy virtues, to the eternal youth
Of all thy goodness, never melancholy ;
To thy large heart and humble mind, that cast
Into one vision, future, present, past.”

The marriage of the poet only introduced into the circle another kindred spirit, and did not to any extent deprive him of the society of his sister, who, as before, continued to reside with him, finding a genial companion in one who had long been a cherished friend. Shall we not then say that Wordsworth was in his companionships at this period happy in a degree to which most of his brother bards have been strangers? With these two high-souled and appreciative women to encircle him with their love and minister to him, to stimulate to lofty thought and high endeavour, what wonder that his life and work attained a fulness and completion seldom reached?

*On Reading Miss Wordsworth's Recollections of a Journey in
Scotland, in 1803, with her Brother and Coleridge.*

“ I close the book, I shut my eyes,
I see the Three before me rise,—
Loving sister, famous brother,
Each one mirrored in the other ;
Brooding William, artless Dora,
Who was to her very core a
Lover of dear Nature's face,
In its perfect loveliness,—
Lover of her glens and flowers,
Of her sunlit clouds and showers,
Of her hills and of her streams,
Of her moonlight—when she dreams ;
Of her tears and of her smiles,
Of her quaint delicious wiles ;
Telling what best pleasures lie
In the loving, unspoiled eye,
In the reverential heart,
That in great Nature sees God's art.

“ And him—the man ‘ of large discourse,’
Of pregnant thought, of critic force,
That grey-eyed sage, who was not wise
In wisdom that in doing lies,
But who had ‘ thoughts that wander through
Eternity,’—the old and new.
Who, when he rises on our sight,
Spite of his failings, shines all bright,
With something of an angel-light.

“ We close the book with thankful heart,
Father of Lights, to Thee, who art
Of every good and perfect gift
The Giver,—unto Thee we lift
Our souls in prayer, that all may see
Thy hand, Thy heart, in all they see.”

ANON. IN *The Spectator*.

CHAPTER IX.

TOUR IN SCOTLAND.

IT was in the months of August and September, in the year following that of his marriage, that Wordsworth and his sister made their memorable six week's tour in Scotland. The character of this tour, as well as the remarkable memorial of it given to the world after a lapse of seventy years, render it, in this place, deserving of more than a mere passing notice. Of the daily incidents of this journey, and the impressions and reflections caused by it, Miss Wordsworth kept a minute journal. Although not intended as a literary production, and written only for the perusal and information of friends, the style is not only pleasing but elegant; and it is a matter for congratulation that the family of the writer at length consented to its publication. This was done in 1874, under the able editorship of Principal Shairp, of St. Andrews, and the work rapidly passed through several editions. Not only is it of much value to those taking an interest in the lives of the poet and his sister; but, containing as it does descriptions at once graceful and graphic of the scenes through which they passed, it cannot fail to afford pleasure to the general reader. The Editor, in his preface, says of it, that he does not remember any other book "more capable of training heart and eye

to look with profit on the face of Nature, as it manifests itself in our northern land.”

Mrs. Wordsworth was not of the party, being detained at home by maternal duties. For the first fortnight the Wordsworths were accompanied by Coleridge, who does not, however, on this occasion, seem to have been the desirable companion of old. Wordsworth has said of him that he was at the time “in bad spirits, and somewhat too much in love with his own dejection.”

The manner of their travelling was altogether in keeping with the humble character of their lives. The Irish car, and the ancient steed—which, from his various wayward freaks, and the difficulty with which he was on certain occasions managed by the poets, must have been somewhat of a screw—were not calculated to afford much luxury or ease. But the object of the tourists was not to make a fashionable holiday. The very love of Nature drew them to her wildest solitudes, and to woo her in her varied moods, as well when frowning and repellant as when smiling and inviting. As they were harvesting for future memories the deep experiences and lingering harmonies which are reaped and garnered by a loving companionship with Nature, it mattered little to them that these were frequently obtained at the cost of weariness and discomfort.

It need not be repeated that for the in-gathering of Nature’s most beneficent gifts the poet could not have had a more fitting companion than his sister. Not only did she idolise him from the depth of the warm and tender heart of young womanhood, but she was possessed of a mind singularly sympathetic with his own, and with

a kindred enthusiasm as to the objects in view. Her splendid health, also, at this time, and strength of limb, made her such a comrade that this tour became to them an enduring joy, to be remembered for all life : She was

“ Fleet and strong—
And down the rocks could leap along
Like rivulets in May.”

In giving a short account of this tour, it will be permissible to take the liberty of a reviewer of quoting a few extracts. What strikes a reader the most in Miss Wordsworth's record is her quickness of observation. Nothing seemed to escape her notice. It was not only the general aspect of Nature in both storm and sunshine, and the diversity of scenes, that spoke to them ; but Miss Wordsworth's eye took in objects the most minute, she was alive to those subtle influences, which serve so much to impart an interest to any journey or circumstance it would not otherwise possess. She took with her her warm loving heart, so full, for all with whom she came into contact, of the milk of human kindness—grateful for little attentions given or favours bestowed, and touched by those traits of humanity which make the whole world kin. There is the constant loving remembrance of small events, to which association sometimes lends such a charm. It was a very simple thing for Miss Wordsworth, writing to her sister-in-law at Grasmere, at an inn by no means remarkable for comfort, to mention that she wrote on the same window-ledge on which her brother had written to her two years before ; but it reveals a loving heart.

On the second day of their journey we find the

following entry in Miss Wordsworth's diary: "Passed Rose Castle upon the Caldew, an ancient building of red stone with sloping gardens, an ivied gateway, velvet lawns, old garden walls, trim flower-borders, with stately and luxuriant flowers. We walked up to the house and stood some minutes watching the swallows that flew about restlessly, and flung their shadows upon the sunbright walls of the old building; the shadows glanced and twinkled, interchanged and crossed each other, expanded and shrunk up, appeared and disappeared every instant; as I observed to William and Coleridge, seeming more like living things than the birds themselves."

Going by way of Carlisle, the small party entered Scotland near Gretna, and proceeded by Dumfries and the Vale of Nith. At Dumfries, the grave and house of Burns had a melancholy interest for them, Miss Wordsworth stating that "there is no thought surviving in Burns's daily life that is not heart depressing."

On leaving the Nith, Miss Wordsworth thus describes the scenery: "We now felt indeed that we were in Scotland; there was a natural peculiarity in this place. In the scenes of the Nith it had not been the same as England, but yet not simple, naked Scotland. The road led us down the hill, and now there was no room in the vale but for the river and the road; we had sometimes the stream to the right, sometimes to the left. The hills were pastoral, but we did not see many sheep; green smooth turf on the left, no ferns. On the right the heath plant grew in abundance, of the most exquisite colour; it covered a whole hill-side, or it was in streams and patches. We travelled along the vale, without

appearing to ascend, for some miles ; all the reaches were beautiful, in exquisite proportion, the hills seeming very high from being so near to us. It might have seemed a valley which Nature had kept to herself for pensive thoughts and tender feelings, but that we were reminded at every turn of the road of something beyond by the coal-carts which were travelling towards us. Though these carts broke in upon the tranquility of the glen, they added much to the picturesque effect of the different views, which indeed wanted nothing, though perfectly bare, houseless, and treeless.

“ After some time our road took us upwards towards the end of the valley. Now the steeps were heathy all around. Just as we began to climb the hill we saw three boys who came down the cleft of a brow on our left ; one carried a fishing-rod, and the hats of all were braided with honeysuckles ; they ran after one another as wanton as the wind. I cannot express what a character of beauty those few honeysuckles in the hats of the three boys gave to the place ; what bower could they have come from ? We walked up the hill, met two well-dressed travellers, the woman barefoot. Our little lads, before they had gone far, were joined by some half-dozen of their companions, all without shoes and stockings. They told us they lived at Wanlockhead, the village above, pointing to the top of the hill ; they went to school and learned Latin, Virgil, and some of them Greek, Homer ; but when Coleridge began to inquire further, off they ran, poor things ! I suppose afraid of being examined.”

The following anecdote is related of Coleridge, when at the falls of Cora Linn : “ We sat upon a bench, placed

for the sake of one of the views, whence we looked down upon the waterfall, and over the open country, and saw a ruined tower, called Wallace's Tower, which stands at a very little distance from the fall, and is an interesting object. A lady and gentleman, more expeditious tourists than ourselves, came to the spot; they left us at the seat, and we found them again at another station above the Falls. Coleridge, who is always good natured enough to enter into conversation with anybody whom he meets in his way, began to talk with the gentleman, who observed that it was a *majestic* waterfall. Coleridge was delighted with the accuracy of the epithet, particularly as he had been settling in his own mind the precise meaning of the words grand, majestic, sublime, &c., and had discussed the subject at some length with William the day before. 'Yes, sir,' says Coleridge, 'it *is* a majestic waterfall.' 'Sublime and beautiful,' replied his friend. Poor Coleridge could make no answer, and, not very desirous to continue the conversation, came to us and related the story, laughing heartily."

Of the falls of the Clyde, Miss Wordsworth observes: "We had been told that the Cartland Craggs were better worth going to see than the falls of the Clyde. I do not think so; but I have seen rocky dells resembling these before, with clear water instead of that muddy stream, and never saw anything like the falls of the Clyde. It would be a delicious spot to have near one's house; one would linger out many a day in the cool shadow of the caverns, and the stream would soothe one by its murmuring; still, being an old friend, one would not love it the less for its homely face. Even we, as we passed

along, could not help stopping for a long while to admire the beauty of the lazy foam, for ever in motion, and never moved away, in a still place of the water, covering the whole surface of it with streaks and lines and ever-varying circles.”

The Highlands were entered at Loch Lomond, of which Miss Wordsworth writes:—“On a splendid evening, with the light of the sun diffused over the whole islands, distant hills, and the broad expanse of the lake, with its creeks, bays, and little slips of water among the islands, it must be a glorious sight.” . . . “We had not climbed far before we were stopped by a sudden burst of prospect, so singular and beautiful, that it was like a flash of images from another world. We stood with our backs to the hill of the island, which we were ascending, and which shut out Ben Lomond entirely, and all the upper part of the lake, and we looked towards the foot of the lake, scattered over with islands without beginning and without end. The sun shone, and the distant hills were visible, some through sunny mists, others in gloom with patches of sunshine; the lake was lost under the low and distant hills, and the islands lost in the lake, which was all in motion with travelling fields of light, or dark shadows under rainy clouds. There are many hills, but no commanding eminence at a distance to confine the prospect, so that the land seemed endless as the water.”

In her description of their adventures at Loch Katrine and the Trossachs, Miss Wordsworth is very happy. Writing of the view from one point she says:—“We saw Benvenue opposite to us—a high mountain

but clouds concealed its top ; its side, rising directly from the lake, is covered with birch trees to a great height, and seamed with innumerable channels of torrents ; but now there was no water in them, nothing to break in upon the stillness and repose of the scene ; nor do I recollect hearing the sound of water from any side, the wind being fallen and the lake perfectly still ; the place was all eye, and completely satisfied the sense and heart. Above and below us, to the right and to the left, were rocks, knolls, and hills, which, wherever anything could grow—and that was everywhere between the rocks—were covered with trees and heather ; the trees did not in any place grow so thick as an ordinary wood ; yet I think there was never a bare space of twenty yards, it was more like a natural forest, where the trees grow in groups or singly, not hiding the surface of the ground, which, instead of being green and mossy, was of the richest purple. The heather was indeed the most luxuriant I ever saw ; it was so tall that a child of ten years old struggling through it would often have been buried head and shoulders, and the exquisite beauty of the colour, near or at a distance, seen under the trees, is not to be conceived. But if I were to go on describing for evermore, I should give but a faint, and very often a false idea of the different objects and the various combinations of them in this most intricate and delicious place ; besides, I tired myself out with describing at Loch Lomond, so I will hasten to the end of my tale. This reminds me of a sentence in a little pamphlet written by the minister of Callander, descriptive of the environs of that place. After having taken up at least six closely-

printed pages with the Trossachs, he concludes thus:—
‘In a word, the Trossachs beggar all description,’ a conclusion in which everybody who has been there will agree with him. I believe the word ‘Trossachs’ signifies ‘many hills’; it is a name given to all the eminences at the foot of Loch Ketterine, and about half a mile beyond.”

As an illustration of the expedients to which they were obliged to resort, and the scanty accommodation afforded to them, may be quoted the following:—
“Our companion from the Trossachs, who, it appeared, was an Edinburgh drawing-master, going, during a vacation, on a pedestrian tour to John o’Groat’s house, was to sleep in the barn with William and Coleridge, where the man said he had plenty of dry hay. I do not believe that the hay of the Highlands is often very dry; but this year it had a better chance than usual. Wet or dry, however, the next morning they said they had slept comfortably. When I went to bed the mistress, desiring me to ‘go ben,’ attended me with a candle, and assured me that the bed was dry, though not ‘sic as I had been used to.’ It was of chaff; there were two others in the room, a cupboard, and two chests, on one of which stood the milk in wooden vessels, covered over. I should have thought that milk so kept could not have been sweet; but the cheese and butter were good. The walls of the whole house were of stone unplastered. It consisted of three apartments—the cow-house at one end; the kitchen, or house, in the middle; and the spence at the other end. The rooms were divided, not up to the rigging, but only to the beginning

of the roof, so that there was a free passage for light and smoke from one end of the house to the other.

“I went to bed sometime before the family. The door was shut between us, and they had a bright fire, which I could not see ; but the light it sent up among the varnished rafters and beams, which crossed each other in almost as intricate and fantastic a manner, as I have seen the under-boughs of a large beech-tree, withered by the depth of the shade above, produced the most beautiful effect that can be conceived. It was like what I should suppose an underground cave or temple to be, with a dripping or moist roof, and the moonlight entering in upon it by some means or other and yet the colours were more like melted gems. I lay looking up till the light of the fire faded away, and the man and his wife and child had crept into their bed at the other end of the room. I did not sleep much, but passed a comfortable night—for my bed, though hard, was warm and clean ; the unusualness of my situation prevented me from sleeping. I could hear the waves beat against the shore of the lake ; a little ‘ syke ’ close to the door made a much louder noise ; and when I sat up in my bed I could see the lake through an open window-place at the bed’s-head. Add to this, it rained all night. I was less occupied by remembrance of the Trossachs, beautiful as they were, than the vision of the Highland hut which I could not get out of my head. I thought of the Fairyland of Spenser, and what I had read in romance at other times, and then what a feast would it be for a London pantomime-maker, could he

but transplant it to Drury Lane, with all its beautiful colours ! ”

Extracts from this admirable and fascinating book might be multiplied ; but I must resist the temptation. It is a book which must be read to be enjoyed. The tourists received impressions not only from the natural scenery, but also from the simple-minded and hospitable Highlanders, with whom they from time to time met. They were so delighted with two Highland girls, in their fresh, youthful beauty, whom they met at the ferry at Inversneyde, that Wordsworth made them the subject of a pleasant poem. Miss Wordsworth, after describing her pleasurable meeting with these girls, says :—“ At this day the innocent merriment of the girls, with their kindness to us, and the beautiful figure and face of the elder, come to my mind whenever I think of the ferry-house and waterfall of Loch Lomond ; and I never think of the two girls but the whole image of that romantic spot is before me—a living image, as it will be, to my dying day.”

The poem of her brother, which cannot be much more poetic than the graceful prose of the sister, is as follows :—

“ Sweet Highland Girl, a very shower
Of beauty is thy earthly dower !
Twice seven consenting years have shed
Their utmost beauty on thy head :
And these grey rocks ; that household lawn ;
Those trees, a veil just half withdrawn ;
This fall of water that doth make
A murmur near the silent Lake ;

This little Bay, a quiet road
That holds in shelter thy abode ;
In truth, together do ye seem
Like something fashioned in a dream ;
Such Forms as from their covert peep
When earthly cares are laid asleep !
But, O fair Creature ! in the light
Of common day, so heavenly bright,
I bless thee, Vision as thou art,
I bless thee with a human heart :
God shield thee to thy latest years !
Thee neither know I, nor thy peers ;
And yet my eyes are filled with tears.

“ With earnest feeling I shall pray
For thee when I am far away :
For never saw I mien or face,
In which more plainly I could trace
Benignity and home-bred sense
Ripening in perfect innocence.
Here, scattered like a random seed,
Remote from men, Thou dost not need
Th’ embarrass’d look of shy distress,
And maidenly shamefacedness ;
Thou wear’st upon thy forehead clear
The freedom of a Mountaineer ;
A face with gladness overspread !
Soft smiles, by human kindness bred !
And seemliness complete, that sways
Thy courtesies, about thee plays ;

With no restraint but such as springs
From quick and eager visitings
Of thoughts that lie beyond the reach
Of thy few words of English speech :
A bondage sweetly brook'd, a strife
That gives thy gestures grace and life !
So have I, not unmoved in mind,
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind—
Thus beating up against the wind.

“What hand but would a garland cull
For thee, who art so beautiful?
O, happy pleasure ! here to dwell
Beside thee in some heathy dell ;
Adopt your homely ways, and dress,
A Shepherd, thou a Shepherdess !
But I could frame a wish for thee
More like a grave reality :
Thou art to me but as a wave
Of the wild sea : and I would have
Some claim upon thee if I could,
Though but of common neighbourhood.
What joy to hear thee, and to see !
Thy elder Brother I would be,
Thy Father—anything to thee.

Now thanks to Heaven ! that of its grace
Hath led me to this lonely place !
Joy have I had ; and going hence
I bear away my recompence.
In spots like these it is we prize
Our Memory, feel that she hath eyes ;

Then, why should I be loth to stir ?
I feel this place was made for her ;
To give new pleasure like the past,
Continued long as life shall last.
Nor am I loth, though pleased at heart,
Sweet Highland Girl, from thee to part ;
For I, methinks, till I grow old,
As fair before me shall behold,
As I do now, the Cabin small,
The Lake, the Bay, the Waterfall,
And Thee, the Spirit of them all."

In a somewhat primitive way, and having to contend with bad roads, accidents to their car, and sometimes hard lodging and scanty fare, they managed to traverse a great part of the country which has since become so familiar to tourists, taking on their way Inverary, Glen Coe, Loch Tay, the Pass of Killicrankie, Dunkeld, Callander, back by the Trossachs to Loch Lomond, and eventually to Edinburgh. Approaching Loch Lomond for the second time, Miss Wordsworth remarks that she felt it much more interesting to visit a place where they had been before than it could possibly be for the first time. By the lake they met two women, without hats but neatly dressed, who seemed to have been taking their Sunday evening's walk. One of them said, in a soft, friendly voice, "What! you are stepping westward?" She adds: "I cannot describe how affecting this simple expression was in that remote place, with the western sky in front, yet glowing with the departed sun." Wordsworth himself some time

afterwards, in remembrance of the incident, wrote the following poem :—

“ ‘ *What ! you are stepping westward ?* ’ ‘ *Yea.* ’
—’Twould be a *wildish* destiny,
If we, who thus together roam
In a strange Land, and far from home,
Were in this place the guests of Chance ;
Yet who would stop or fear to advance,
Though home or shelter he had none,
With such a sky to lead him on ?

“ The dewy ground was dark and cold,
Behind all gloomy to behold,
And stepping westward seem’d to be
A kind of *heavenly* destiny ;
I liked the greeting ; ’twas a sound
Of something without place or bound ;
And seemed to give me spiritual right
To travel through that region bright.

“ The voice was soft ; and she who spake
Was walking by her native lake ;
The salutation was to me
The very sound of courtesy ;
Its power was felt, and while my eye
Was fix’d upon the glowing Sky,
The echo of the voice enwrought
A human sweetness, with the thought
Of travelling through the world that lay
Before me in my endless way.”

With Edinburgh Miss Wordsworth was delighted.

She says ; “ It was impossible to think of anything that was little or mean, the goings on of trade, the strife of men, or every-day city business ; the impression was one, and it was visionary ; like the conceptions of our childhood of Bagdad or Balsora, when we have been reading the ‘ Arabian Nights’ Entertainments.’ ”

Not the least memorable part of their tour was a visit to Sir—then Mr.—Walter Scott, who was then unknown to fame as a novelist, but who, as Sheriff of Selkirk, and considered a very clever and amiable man, was universally respected. With him they visited Melrose and other places of interest. Miss Wordsworth writes : “ Walked up to Ferniehurst—an old hall, in a secluded situation, now inhabited by farmers ; the neighbouring ground had the wildness of a forest, being irregularly scattered over with fine old trees. The wind was tossing their branches, and sunshine dancing among the leaves, and I happened to exclaim, ‘ What a life there is in trees !’ on which Mr. Scott observed that the words reminded him of a young lady who had been born and educated on an island of the Orcades, and came to spend a summer at Kelso, and in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. She used to say that in the new world into which she was come nothing had disappointed her so much as trees and woods ; she complained that they were lifeless, silent, and, compared with the grandeur of the ever-changing ocean, even insipid. At first I was surprised, but the next moment I felt that the impression was natural. Mr. Scott said that she was a very sensible young woman, and had read much. She talked with endless rapture and feeling of the power and

greatness of the ocean ; and, with the same passionate attachment, returned to her native island without any probability of quitting it again. The Valley of the Jed is very solitary immediately under Ferniehurst ; we walked down the river, wading almost up to the knees in fern, which in many parts overspread the forest-ground. It made me think of our walks at Alfoxden, and of *our own* park—though at Ferniehurst is no park at present—and the slim fawns that we used to startle from their couching-places, among the fern at the top of the hill.”

The journal contains many short passages which might be quoted to show its poetic character. The following are selected almost at random : “ I can always walk over a moor with a light foot ; I seem to be drawn more closely to Nature in such places than anywhere else ; or, rather, I feel more strongly the power of Nature over me, and am better satisfied with myself, for being able to find enjoyment in what, unfortunately to many persons, is either dismal or insipid.” “ The opposite bank of the river is left in its natural wildness, and nothing was to be seen higher up but the deep dell, its steep banks being covered with fine trees, a beautiful relief or contrast to the garden, which is one of the most elaborate old things ever seen—a little hanging garden of Babylon.” Again, she writes : “ The greatest charm of a brook or river is in the liberty to pursue it through its windings ; you can then take it in whatever mood you like—silent or noisy, sportive or quiet. The beauties of the brook or river must be sought, and the pleasure is in going in search of them ; those of the

lake or of the sea come to you of themselves." "The sky was grey and heavy—floating mists on the hillsides, which softened the objects, and where we lost sight of the lake it appeared so near to the sky that they almost touched one another, giving a visionary beauty to the prospect." From the reflection of the crimson clouds the water appeared of a deep red, like melted rubies, yet with a mixture of a grey or blackish hue; the gorgeous light of the sky, with the singular colour of the lake, made the scene exceedingly romantic; yet it was more melancholy than cheerful. With all the power of light from the clouds there was an overcasting of the gloom of evening—a twilight upon the hills."

This tour was rich in its results, not only in the sister's journal but also in the poems of the brother, to which it gave birth. Alluding to these a contributor to *Blackwood*, so long ago as 1835, says: "Wordsworth in Scotland as in England and Switzerland, and Italy and the Tyrol, is still Wordsworth. Here, too, he reaps:—

‘The harvests of a quiet eye

That broods and sleeps on his own heart.’”

His thoughts, and feelings, and visions, and dreams, and fancies, and imaginations, are all his own, by some divine right which no other mortal shares along with him; and, true as they all are to nature, are all distinguished by some indefinable, but delightful charm peculiar to his own being, which assuredly is the most purely spiritual that ever was enshrined in human dust. Safe in his originality he fears not to travel the same

ground that has been travelled by thousands—and beaten, and barren, and naked as it may seem to be—he is sure to detect some loveliest family of wild flowers that had lurked unseen in some unsuspected crevices—to soothe his ears with a transient murmur, the spirit of the wilderness awakens—the bee that had dropped on the moss as if benumbed by frost—the small moorland bird revived by sunshine, sent from heaven for the poet's sake, goes twittering in circles in the air above his head, nor is afraid that its nest will be trodden by his harmless feet ; and should a sudden summer shower affront the sunshine, it is that a rainbow may come and go for his delight, and leave its transitory splendours in some immortal song. On the great features of Nature—lochs and mountains, among which he has lived his days—he looks with a serene but sovereign eye, as if he held them all in fee, and they stood there to administer to the delight—we must not say the pride—of him, ‘Sole king of rocky Cumberland ;’ and true it is that from the assemblage of their summits, in the sunset, impulses of deeper mood have come to him in solitude than ever visited the heart of any other poet. . . . The true Highland spirit is there ; but another spirit, too, which Wordsworth carries with him wherever he goes in the sanctuary of his own genius, and which colours all it breathes on—lending lovelier light to the fair, and more awful gloom to the great, and ensouling what else were but cold death.”

CHAPTER X.

LIFE AT GRASMERE. CAPTAIN WORDSWORTH.

A VISIT paid by Coleridge to Grasmere, shortly after the Scottish tour, is thus alluded to in a letter written by him to his friend, Mr. Thomas Wedgwood, in January, 1804. He says:—"I left my home December 20th, 1803, intending to stay a day and a half at Grasmere and then walk to Kendal, whither I had sent all my clothes and viatica, from thence to go to London, and to see whether or no I could arrange my pecuniary matters, so as, leaving Mrs. Coleridge all that was necessary to her comforts, to go myself to Madeira, having a persuasion strong as the life within me, that one winter spent in a really warm, genial climate, would completely restore me I stayed at Grasmere (Mr. Wordsworth's) a month ; three-fourths of the time bed-ridden ; and deeply do I feel the enthusiastic kindness of Wordsworth's wife and sister, who sat up by me, the one or the other, in order to awaken me at the first symptoms of distressful feeling ; and even when they went to rest continued often and often to weep and watch for me even in their dreams."

The death of her brother, Captain John Wordsworth, in the early part of 1805, was a great sorrow to Miss Wordsworth, as well as to the other members of the

family. Captain Wordsworth was a younger brother of the poet, and a great favourite with him and his sister. In consequence of their early orphaned condition, and subsequent separation, they had not enjoyed much of each other's society until the time of Wordsworth's residence at Grasmere. Previously to this, and since the two brothers had been at school together at Hawkshead, they had only occasionally seen each other.

After the settlement of Wordsworth and his sister at Grasmere, this brother, who was in the service of the East India Company, had paid them a prolonged visit, extending over eight months. The fraternal ties were then renewed and strengthened, cemented as they became by mature sympathies. A kinship of thought and feeling, added to warm natural affections, bound together these three poetic souls in mutual love more than usually devoted. Captain Wordsworth recognised his brother's genius and greatness of soul, and felt assured that the time would arrive when they would be widely acknowledged. Writing of him to Miss Wordsworth, Coleridge says :—"Your brother John is one of you—a man who hath solitary usings of his own intellect, deep in feeling, with a subtle tact, and swift instinct of true beauty." Himself so thoroughly in harmony with his brother's pursuits, and an ardent lover of the beautiful in Nature, as well as in life, he became, as Wordsworth says, "a silent poet," and was known among those of his own craft as "The Philosopher." Captain Wordsworth had so identified himself in heart with his brother's pursuits, and had become so enamoured of the life led by him and their

sister in this quiet and beautiful vale, "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife," that he had formed the idea, if prospered during a few voyages, of settling at Grasmere, and adding his worldly store to theirs, in the hope of thus enabling Wordsworth to devote his attention to his muse, unfettered by anxious thoughts of a monetary character. With this loving object before him, he had made a voyage in the year 1801 without success. Again, in the spring of 1803, he sailed with the same hope in his heart, but only on this occasion also to return, without having in any degree been able to further its realisation.

In the meantime, money which had been long withheld from the Wordsworths by the former Earl of Lonsdale, had been honourably paid by his successor. Although the main object which Captain Wordsworth had in view in his former expeditions thus no longer existed, he decided once more to brave the fortunes of the deep. Being, in the year 1804, appointed to the command of the East Indiaman, *Abergavenny*, bound for the East, he sailed from Portsmouth, in the early part of 1805, upon a voyage on which many hopes were built. We are informed that on this occasion the value of the cargo (including specie) was £270,000, and that there were on board 402 persons. Not only did Captain Wordsworth take with him the share which had come to him of the money paid by the Earl of Lonsdale, but also £1,200 belonging to his brother William and his sister. The bright hopes were, however, doomed to end in the saddest of disaster. Owing to the incompetence of a pilot, the ship struck off the Bill of Portland on the

5th February, 1805. Captain Wordsworth died, as he had lived, cheerfully doing his duty. Though he might have saved his own life, he bravely remained at his post to the last, and perished with most of the crew.

Writing of the sad occurrence to Sir George Beaumont shortly after, Wordsworth says:—"My poor sister and my wife, who loved him almost as we did (for he was one of the most amiable of men) are in miserable affliction, which I do all in my power to alleviate; but, Heaven knows, I want consolation myself. I can say nothing higher of my ever-dear brother than that he was worthy of his sister, who is now weeping beside me, and of the friendship of Coleridge; meek, affectionate, silently enthusiastic, loving all quiet things, and a poet in everything but words." In a postscript he adds:—"I shall do all in my power to sustain my sister under her sorrow, which is, and long will be, bitter and poignant. We did not love him as a brother merely, but as a man of original mind, and an honour to all about him. Oh! dear friend, forgive me for talking thus. We have had no tidings from Coleridge. I tremble for the moment when he is to hear of my brother's death; it will distress him to the heart,—and his poor body cannot bear sorrow. He loved my brother, and he knows how we at Grasmere loved him."

The friendship between the Wordsworths and Charles and Mary Lamb, formed during the Nether Stowey period, had continued, and they had been regular correspondents. Shortly after the sad death of her brother Miss Wordsworth had, in the fulness of her heart, written to Miss Lamb. Although the response to the communi-

cation is well known it should find a place here. Miss Lamb's reply shows how well qualified she was to sympathise in her friend's sufferings. She had, indeed, been taught in the same school. She says :—
“ I thank you, my kind friend, for your most comfortable letter; till I saw your own handwriting I could not persuade myself that I should do well to write to you, though I have often attempted it; but I always left off dissatisfied with what I had written, and feeling that I was doing an improper thing to intrude upon your sorrow. I wished to tell you that you would one day feel the kind of peaceful state of mind, and sweet memory of the dead, which you so happily describe as now almost begun; but I felt that it was improper and most grating to the feelings of the afflicted to say to them that the memory of their affliction would in time become a constant part, not only of their dream, but of their most wakeful sense of happiness. That you would see every object with and through your lost brother, and that that would at last become a real and everlasting source of comfort to you I felt, and well knew from my own experience in sorrow; but till you yourself began to feel this I didn't dare tell you so; but I send you some poor lines, which I wrote under this conviction of mind, and before I heard Coleridge was returning home. I will transcribe them now before I finish my letter, lest a false shame prevent me then, for I know they are much worse than they ought to be, written as they were with strong feeling and on such a subject; every line seems to me to be borrowed; but I had no better way of expressing my thoughts, and I never have the power of

altering or amending anything I have once laid aside with dissatisfaction :—

“ ‘ Why is he wandering on the sea ?
Coleridge should now with Wordsworth be.
By slow degrees he'd steal away
Their woe and gently bring a ray
(So happily he'd time relief)
Of comfort from their very grief.
He'd tell them that their brother dead,
When years have passed o'er their head,
Will be remembered with such holy,
True, and perfect melancholy,
That ever this lost brother John
Will be their heart's companion.
His voice they'll always hear,
His face they'll always see ;
There's nought in life so sweet
As such a memory. ’ ”

Miss Wordsworth's reply to this letter has not been preserved. It came to the hands of Charles Lamb when his sister was undergoing one of her temporary but most sad confinements, in the asylum she periodically visited. On the 14th of June, 1805, Charles wrote for her to acknowledge the letter, one from which the following extract may be given :—“ Your long, kind letter has not been thrown away (for it has given me great pleasure to find you are all resuming your old occupations and are better) ; but poor Mary, to whom it is addressed, cannot yet relish it. She has been attacked by one of her severe illnesses, and is at present *from home*. Last Monday

week was the day she left me, and I hope I may calculate upon having her again in a month or little more. I am rather afraid late hours have, in this case, contributed to her indisposition. I have every reason to suppose that this illness, like all the former ones, will be but temporary ; but I cannot always feel so. Meantime she is dead to me, and I miss a prop. All my strength is gone, and I am like a fool, bereft of her co-operation. I dare not think lest I should think wrong, so used am I to look up to her in the least as in the biggest perplexity. To say all that I know of her would be more than I think anybody could believe, or even understand ; and when I hope to have her well again with me, it would be sinning against her feelings to go about to praise her, for I can conceal nothing that I do from her. She is older and wiser and better than I, and all my wretched imperfections I cover to myself by resolutely thinking on her goodness. She would share life and death, heaven and hell with me. She lives but for me ; and I know I have been wasting and teasing her life for five years past incessantly with my cursed drinking and ways of going on. But even in this upbraiding of myself I am offending against her, for I know that she has clung to me for better for worse ; and if the balance has been against her hitherto it was a noble trade."

The following letter of Charles Lamb, addressed "to Mr. and Miss Wordsworth," on the 28th of September, 1805, enclosing his "Farewell to Tobacco" may also find a place here :—"I wish you may think this a handsome farewell to my 'Friendly Traitor.' Tobacco has been my evening comfort and my morning curse for

nearly five years ; and you know how difficult it is from refraining to pick one's lips even, when it has become a habit. This poem is the only one which I have finished since so long as when I wrote 'Hester Savory.' I have had it in my head to do this two years, but tobacco stood in its own light when it gave me headaches that prevented my singing its praises. Now you have got it, you have got all my store, for I have absolutely not another line. No more has Mary. We have nobody about us that cares for poetry ; and who will rear grapes when he shall be the sole eater ? Perhaps if you encourage us to show you what we may write, we may do something now and then before we absolutely forget the quantity of an English line for want of practice. The 'Tobacco' being a little in the way of Withers (whom Southey so much likes) perhaps you will somehow convey it to him with my kind remembrances. Then, everybody will have seen it that I wish to see it, I having sent it to Malta.

" I remain, dear W. and D.,

" Yours truly,

" C. LAMB."

CHAPTER XI.

DE QUINCEY.—HIS DESCRIPTION OF MISS WORDSWORTH.

—ALLAN BANK.

IT was in the year 1807 that De Quincey was added to the number of the literary friends of the Wordsworths. He has given an interesting account of the way in which the acquaintanceship was first formed. He had, indeed, been for some years an ardent admirer of the poet, and had had some correspondence with him in 1803. The characteristic timidity of this wayward genius is illustrated by the fact, that although De Quincey had conceived an eager longing to form the personal acquaintance of Wordsworth, and had been favoured with a standing invitation to visit him, he allowed upwards of four years to pass without availing himself of the privilege of the meeting, “for which, beyond all things under heaven, he longed.”

He has recorded how he had on two occasions taken a long journey with no other object. On one of these occasions he had proceeded as far only as Coniston—a distance from Grasmere of eight miles—when, his courage failing him, he returned.

The second time he actually so far kept up his courage as to traverse the distance between Coniston and the Vale of Grasmere, and came in sight of the “little

white cottage gleaming among trees," which was the goal of his desire. After, however, he had caught "one hasty glimpse of this loveliest of landscapes," he "retreated like a guilty thing." This was in 1806. During the following year circumstances combined to bring about the much desired meeting.

A short time after an introduction to Coleridge, in the summer of this year, De Quincey learnt that Coleridge, who was engaged to lecture in town, desired to send his family to Keswick, and he was glad to accept De Quincey's offer to escort them. As Grasmere lay in their route, and Mrs. Coleridge was a cherished friend of the Wordsworths, a call upon them was the most natural thing, as was also an invitation to spend the night, and resume their journey on the following day.

Describing the cottage, De Quincey says: "A little semi-vestibule between two doors prefaces the entrance into what may be considered the principal room. It was an oblong square, not above eight and a-half feet high, sixteen feet long, and twelve feet broad; very prettily wainscotted from the floor to the ceiling with dark-polished oak, slightly embellished with carving. One window there was, a perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes, embowered at almost every season of the year with roses, and, in the summer and autumn, with a profusion of jasmine, and other fragrant shrubs."

After a description of Mrs. Wordsworth, as before alluded to, he follows with a most interesting account of the appearance of Miss Wordsworth: "Immediately behind her moved a lady shorter, slighter, and, per-

haps, in all other respects, as different from her in personal characteristics, as could have been wished for the most effective contrast. Her face was of Egyptian brown ; rarely in a woman of English birth had I seen a more determinate Gipsy tan. Her eyes were not soft, as Mrs. Wordsworth's, nor were they fierce or bold ; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm, and even ardent ; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep ; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression, by the irrepressible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age, and her maidenly condition, gave to her whole demeanour, and to her conversation, an air of embarrassment, and even of self-conflict, that was almost distressing to witness. Even her very utterance and enunciation often suffered in point of clearness and steadiness from the agitation of her excessive organic sensibility. At times the self-counteraction and self-baffling of her feelings caused her even to stammer, and so determinately to stammer, that a stranger who should have seen her, and quitted her in that state of feeling, would certainly have set her down for one plagued with that infirmity of speech as distressingly as Charles Lamb himself. This was Miss Wordsworth, the only sister of the poet—his 'Dorothy,' who naturally owed so much to the life-long intercourse with her great brother, in his most solitary and sequestered years ; but, on the other hand, to whom he has acknowledged obligations of the

profoundest nature ; and, in particular, this mighty one, through which we also, the admirers and worshippers of this great poet, are become equally her debtors—that whereas the intellect of Wordsworth was, by its original tendency, too stern, too austere, too much enamoured of an ascetic harsh sublimity, she it was,—the lady who paced by his side continually through sylvan and mountain tracts—in Highland glens and in the dim recesses of German charcoal burners—that first *couched* his eye to the sense of beauty, humanised him by the gentler charities, and engrafted with her delicate female touch those graces upon the ruder growths of his nature, which have since clothed the forest of his genius with a foliage corresponding in loveliness and beauty to the strength of its boughs and the massiness of its trunks. The greatest deductions from Miss Wordsworth's attractions, and from the exceeding interest which surrounded her in right of her character, of her history, and of the relation which she fulfilled towards her brother, were the glancing quickness of her motions, and other circumstances in her deportment (such as her stooping attitude when walking) which gave an ungraceful, and even unsexual, character to her appearance when out of doors. She did not cultivate the graces which preside over the person and its carriage. But, on the other hand, she was a person of very remarkable endowments, intellectually ; and, in addition to the other great services which she rendered to her brother, this I may mention as greater than all the rest, and it was one which equally operated to the benefit of every casual companion in a walk—viz., the exceeding sympathy, always ready and

always profound, by which she made all that one could tell her, all that one could describe, all that one could quote from a foreign author, reverberate, as it were, *à plusieurs reprises*, to one's own feelings, by the manifest impression it made upon *hers*. The pulses of light are not more quick or more inevitable in their flow and undulation than were the answering and echoing movements of her sympathising attention. Her knowledge of literature was irregular and thoroughly unsystematic. She was content to be ignorant of many things ; but what she knew and had really mastered lay where it could not be disturbed—in the temple of her own most fervid heart."

Proceeding to compare his impressions of the two ladies he adds :—"Miss Wordsworth had seen more of life, and even of good company ; for she had lived, when quite a girl, under the protection of Dr. Cookson, a near relative, Canon of Windsor, and a personal favourite of the Royal family, especially of George III. Consequently she ought to have been the more polished of the two ; and yet, from greater natural aptitudes for refinement of manner in her sister-in-law, and partly, perhaps, from her more quiet and subdued manner, Mrs. Wordsworth would have been pronounced very much the more lady-like person."

De Quincey excuses the large latitude used in his descriptions on the ground of "the interest which attaches to any one so nearly connected with a great poet," and the repetition of them is, perhaps, to be justified only for the same reason.

In further allusion to Miss Wordsworth he says :—"Miss Wordsworth was too ardent and fiery a creature

to maintain the reserve essential to dignity ; and dignity was the last thing one thought of in the presence of one so natural, so fervent in her feelings, and so embarrassed in their utterance—sometimes, also, in the attempt to check them. It must not, however, be supposed, that there was any silliness, or weakness of enthusiasm, about her. She was under the continual restraint of severe good sense, though liberated from that false shame which, in so many persons, accompanies all expressions of natural emotion ; and she had too long enjoyed the ennobling conversation of her brother, and his admirable comments on the poets, which they read in common, to fail in any essential point of logic or propriety of thought. Accordingly, her letters, though the most careless and unelaborate—nay, the most hearty that can be imagined—are models of good sense and just feeling. In short, beyond any person I have known in this world, Miss Wordsworth was the creature of impulse ; but, as a woman most thoroughly virtuous and well principled, as one who could not fail to be kept right by her own excellent heart, and as an intellectual creature from her cradle, with much of her illustrious brother's peculiarity of mind—finally as one who had been, in effect, educated and trained by that very brother—she won the sympathy and respectful regard of every man worthy to approach her.”

De Quincey subsequently relates how he was entertained for the night in the best bedroom of the poet's home, and on the following morning discovered Miss Wordsworth preparing the breakfast in the little sitting-room. He adds :—“On the third morning the whole

family, except the two children, prepared for the expedition across the mountains. I had heard of no horses, and took it for granted that we were to walk; however, at the moment of starting, a cart—the common farmer's cart of the country—made its appearance; and the driver was a bonny young woman of the vale. Accordingly, we were carted along to the little town, or village, of Ambleside—three and a half miles distant. Our style of travelling occasioned no astonishment; on the contrary, we met a smiling salutation wherever we appeared—Miss Wordsworth being, as I observed, the person the most familiarly known of our party, and the one who took upon herself the whole expenses of the flying colloquies exchanged with stragglers on the road.”

Although the little home at Town End is so closely identified with Wordsworth as being his residence in his poetic prime he this year (1807) found it necessary, in consequence of his increasing family, to remove to a larger house. He went to Allan Bank, about a mile distant, and remained there four years. This residence is not nearly so closely connected with the memory of the Wordsworths as either Dove Cottage or Rydal Mount. The time was not, however, by any means an unproductive one, for here he composed the greater part of the “Excursion,” the whole of which poem is said to have been transcribed by his faithful and industrious sister. It is interesting to know that the now historic cottage, which is possessed of such a charm as the first mountain home of Miss Wordsworth in this district, was afterwards for some years the residence of De Quincey himself. After his first visit, of which he has given such a graphic account,

it appears that he paid another towards the end of 1808; and that he then enjoyed the hospitality of the Wordsworths until the February following, when, having assisted during a stay in London in the correction in its progress through the press of Wordsworth's pamphlet, "The Convention of Cintra," he formed the project of settling in Grasmere. Writing to him Miss Wordsworth says:—"Soon you must have rest, and we shall all be thankful. You have indeed been a treasure to us while you have been in London, having spared my brother so much anxiety and care. We are very grateful to you."

Whatever service De Quincey rendered to Wordsworth in assisting in the publication of "The Convention of Cintra" was much more than repaid in the active kindness of Miss Wordsworth herself, who, was for some months engaged in preparing the cottage at Town End for its new resident. It was, indeed, no small service for her to undertake the multifarious and exhausting duties in connection with the furnishing and fitting up of a home; and shows not only her unflagging activity and energy, but also her sound sense and excellent judgment. As an instance of her thoughtful economy on the occasion may be mentioned her reason for choosing mahogany for book shelves instead of deal, for she says:—"Native woods are dear; and that in case De Quincey should leave the country and have a sale, no sort of wood sells so well at second-hand as mahogany." To Miss Wordsworth was also entrusted the duty of engaging a house-keeper for De Quincey.

The frequent allusions in these pages to De Quincey, and his close association for some years with the

Wordsworths, render it necessary that some further reference should be made to his subsequent connection with Grasmere. The following is a description given by him of his own life in 1812 :—

“And what am I doing among the mountains? Taking opium. Yes; but what else? Why, reader, in 1812, the year we are now arrived at, as well as for some years previous, I have been chiefly studying German metaphysics, as the writings of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, &c. And how, and in what manner do I live? In short, what class or description of men do I belong to? I am at this period,—viz., in 1812,—living in a cottage; and with a single female servant, who, amongst my neighbours, passes by the name of my ‘housekeeper.’ And, as a scholar and a man of learned education, I may presume to class myself as an unworthy member of that indefinite body called *gentlemen*. Partly on the ground I have assigned,—partly because, from having no visible calling or business, it is rightly judged that I must be living on my private fortune,—I am so classed by my neighbours; and by the courtesy of modern England, I am usually addressed on letters, &c., *Esquire*. . . . Am I married? Not yet. And I still take opium? On Saturday nights. . . . And how do I find my health after all this opium-eating? In short, how do I do? Why, pretty well, I thank you, reader. In fact, if I dared to say the simple truth (though, in order to satisfy the theories of some medical men, I ought to be ill), I was never better in my life than in the spring of 1812; and I hope, sincerely, that the quantity of claret, port, or ‘London particular Madeira,’ which, in

all probability, you, good reader, have taken, and design to take, for every term of eight years during your natural life, may as little disorder your health as mine was disordered by all the opium I had taken (though in quantity such that I might well have bathed and swum in it) for the eight years between 1804 and 1812."

In 1816 De Quincey married a young woman named Margaret Simpson, the daughter of a farmer living in a cottage under Nab Scar, not far from his own at Town End, who became devoted to his interests. He continued to reside partly at Grasmere until the year 1830, although his literary duties necessitated his being much at London and Edinburgh. It was in 1821 that his now famous "Confessions of an Opium Eater" began to appear in the pages of the *London Magazine*. Afterwards his connection with Blackwood took him a good deal to Edinburgh. Although he and his wife did not like the idea of quitting altogether the peaceful vale where she had been reared, it became evident that it was undesirable to keep up two houses, leaving his wife and children so much alone at Grasmere. The following extract from a letter written by Miss Wordsworth to him in November of this year shows her warm interest in him and his family, and her readiness to give well-timed sympathy and aid. After alluding to a visit paid by her to Mrs. De Quincey, and the health of the children, she says:—"Mrs. De Quincey seemed, on the whole, in very good spirits; but, with something of sadness in her manner, she told me you were not likely very soon to be at home. She then said that you had, at present, some literary employments at Edinburgh, and had, besides,

an offer (or something to this effect) of a permanent engagement, the nature of which she did not know, but that you hesitated about accepting it, as it might necessitate you to settle in Edinburgh. To this I replied, 'Why not settle there, for the time, at least, that this engagement lasts? Lodgings are cheap at Edinburgh, and provisions and coals not dear. Of this fact I had some weeks' experience four years ago.' I then added that it was my firm opinion that you could never regularly keep up your engagements at a distance from the press, and, said I, 'pray tell him so when you write.' She replied, 'do write yourself.' Now I could not refuse to give her pleasure by so doing, especially being assured that my letter would not be wholly worthless to you, having such agreeable news to send of your family."

This excellent advice was soon afterwards acted upon, and Edinburgh became the scene of De Quincey's further life and labours. Here he died on the 8th of December, 1859, aged 74 years:

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHILDREN OF BLENTARN GHYLL.

DEATH OF WORDSWORTH'S CHILDREN.

A MELANCHOLY incident which occurred during her residence at Allan Bank may be mentioned, since Miss Wordsworth took such an active, sympathetic interest in the relief and succour of the sufferers. It is not, however, necessary to relate in detail the sad story, as this has been done by De Quincey and others.

Nestling in the valley of Easedale still stands a humble farm-house called Blentarn Ghyll, which takes its name from a mountain ravine near by. Here, in the year 1808, lived an industrious farmer and his wife named George and Sarah Green, with their six children, the youngest a baby, and the eldest a girl of nine or ten. On the morning of a day long to be remembered George Green and his wife started off over the mountains—a distance of five or six miles—to Langdale, to attend a sale of furniture (on which occasions these scattered neighbours used to meet) intending to return the same evening. Notwithstanding that some of their friends endeavoured to dissuade them from returning by the mountains, they, in the afternoon, started on their return journey. And neither of them was ever seen in life again. A fall of snow came, in which they hopelessly

lost their way, and, as De Quincey says, "they disappeared into the cloud of death." Meanwhile, the poor little children sat round the fire waiting in vain for their parents' return. The eldest, little Agnes Green, whose emotions were, during that and subsequent days, changed from those of a child of tender years to those of a mother, became heroic in her devotion to her tiny brothers and sisters. The lonely farmhouse, with its little inhabitants, was for some days surrounded by drifts of snow, which prevented their leaving it. Meantime, as day succeeded day, the brave Agnes cheered up the others as best she could, preparing their scanty meals, and making the elder ones say their prayers night and morning. It was not until the third day that she was able to force her way through the snow and tell the sad tale, inquiring with tearful face whether her father and mother had been seen.

Such was the interest felt in the story of their loss, that all the able-bodied men of Grasmere formed themselves into a search band ; but it was not until after the expiration of three days that the bodies of the faithful couple were found near Dungeon Ghyll, the husband being at the bottom of a rock, from which he had fallen, where his wife had crept round to him. They were only a few hundred yards from a farmhouse, to which, however, their cries for help had not reached, or had been mistaken. In the future of the helpless orphans Miss Wordsworth took an active interest, and raised a considerable sum of money for their benefit. The Royal Family were made acquainted with the sad history, and the Queen herself and her daughters became subscribers

to the fund. The children were taken into different families in the neighbourhood, one of them going to live with the Wordsworths. The heroic little Agnes died many years ago, and is buried in Grasmere Churchyard beside her parents. Three of these children yet survive, the eldest of whom, now 85 years old, has given me some of the foregoing particulars. He still well remembers the circumstances of that fatal journey, and the vain waiting, during the hours of night, for the father and mother who never returned. Another survivor—the one who was at the time a little baby girl—is now blind, and, I believe, a great grandmother.

Among other lasting friendships of the Wordsworths which we find existing about this period is that with Mr. Henry Crabb Robinson, whose “Diary and Reminiscences” afford some pleasant recollections of many of the *literati* of his time among whom he had a very extensive acquaintance. In 1810 Miss Wordsworth had been paying a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Clarkson (of anti-slave trade celebrity) at Bury. Mr. Robinson met her there, and, being about to return to London when Miss Wordsworth was intending to pay a visit to Charles and Mary Lamb, he undertook to escort her thither. Upon her return home she wrote to him the following letter:—

“Grasmere, November 6, 1810.

“MY DEAR SIR,—I am very proud of the commission my brother has given me, as it affords me an opportunity of expressing the pleasure with which I think of you, and of our long journey side by side in the pleasant sunshine, our splendid entrance into the great city, and our rambles

together in the crowded streets. I assure you I am not ungrateful for even the least of your kind attentions, and shall be happy in return to be your guide amongst these mountains, where, if you bring a mind free from care, I can promise you a rich store of noble enjoyments. My brother and sister will be exceedingly happy to see you; and, if you tell him stories from Spain of enthusiasm, patriotism, and detestation of the usurper, my brother will be a ready listener; and in presence of these grand works of nature you may feed each other's lofty hopes. We are waiting with the utmost anxiety for the issue of that battle which you arranged so nicely by Charles Lamb's fireside. My brother goes to seek the newspapers whenever it is possible to get a sight of one, and he is almost out of patience that the tidings are delayed so long.

* * * * *

“Pray, as you are most likely to see *Charles* at least from time to time, tell me how they are going on. There is nobody in the world out of our house for whom I am more deeply interested. You will, I know, be happy that our little ones are all going on well. The delicate little Catherine, the only one for whom we had any serious alarm, gains ground daily. Yet it will be long before she can be or have the appearance of being a stout child. There was great joy in the house at my return, which each showed in a different way. They are sweet wild creatures, and I think you would love them all. John is thoughtful with his wildness; Dora alive, active, and quick; Thomas, innocent and simple as a new-born babe. John had no feeling but of bursting joy when he saw me.

Dorothy's first question was, 'Where is my doll?' We had delightful weather when I first got home; but on the first morning Dorothy roused me from my sleep with, 'It is time to get up, Aunt; it is a blasty morning—it does blast so.' And the next morning, not more encouraging, she said, 'It is a hailing morning—it hails so hard.' You must know that our house stands on a hill, exposed to all hails and blasts.

“D. WORDSWORTH.”

From the above letter it will be seen, as can be well understood, that Miss Wordsworth was a great favourite with the poet's children, of whom there were then born the four mentioned. To these children, and the interests and enjoyments of their young lives, she devoted herself with the unselfish devotion and zeal which so pervaded her life and animated her conduct.

Sara Coleridge, the daughter of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, between whose family and that of Wordsworth the most cordial relations always existed, in the record of her early life has a pleasant recollection of a visit paid by her to Allan Bank when she was six years old. She writes: —“That journey to Grasmere gleams before me as the shadow of a shade. Allan Bank is a large house on the hill overlooking Easedale on one side and Grasmere on the other. Dorothy, Mr. Wordsworth's only daughter, was at the time very picturesque in her appearance, with her long thick yellow locks, which were never cut, but curled with papers, a thing which seems much out of keeping with the poetic, simple household. I remember being asked by my father and Miss Wordsworth, the

poet's sister, if I did not think her very pretty. 'No,' said I, bluntly, for which I met with a rebuff, which made me feel as if I was a culprit."

Miss Coleridge also gives the following reminiscence : — " Miss Wordsworth, Mr. Wordsworth's sister, of most poetic eye and temper, took a great part with the children. She told us once a pretty story of a primrose, I think, which she espied by the wayside when she went to see me soon after my birth, though that was at Christmas, and how this same primrose was still blooming when she went back to Grasmere."

The life of Miss Wordsworth had hitherto been, on the whole, one of serene and calm enjoyment. In the social circle bound so closely in mutual affection, and so richly endowed with the faculty of making herself happy—of truly living—the only cloud during many years of brightness had been the death of her brother John. It could not, however, but have been expected that the happy circle would become still more acquainted with the common lot of mortal life.

During their residence at the parsonage at Grasmere, where they were living in 1812, the circle was broken by the loss of two of their children, then five in number. In the case of one, the interesting and delicate little Kate, then about four years old, the circumstances were peculiarly distressing. The way in which her very brief illness was caused has not been very clearly stated. De Quincey has attributed it to what he calls by the harsh name of the "criminal negligence" of one of the children of the George and Sarah Green before-mentioned, whom the Wordsworths had taken to live with

them. He relates that while little Catherine was under the care of Sarah Green she was allowed to eat a number of raw carrots, in consequence of which she was very shortly seized with strong convulsions. Although she partially recovered the immediate effect, her left side remained in a disabled condition.

It was some months after this that little Kate, having gone to bed bright and happy at the hour of a June sunset, was discovered in a speechless condition about midnight, and died in convulsions after a few hours' suffering. While, as may be imagined, the grief of her parents at the loss was great, that of De Quincey (who was not at Grasmere at the time, and was informed of the event by Miss Wordsworth) was so poignant and extravagant as to become romantic. The dear child had got so near the heart of the little dreamy opium-eater—had, in fact, found so warm a corner there—that he seemed to be almost overwhelmed. The heart was empty, and the eyes that could no longer gaze upon the living form were filled with its image. He used to imagine that he saw her. So great was his grief that we are told he often spent the night upon her grave. This may appear very extravagant, as it doubtless is; but we cannot measure a man like De Quincey by any ordinary standard. Possessing as he did a gigantic and immortal genius, he was at the same time one of the most unimaginable and eccentric, unreal and dreamy of beings that ever owned a warm human heart. The Wordsworth children were especially dear to him, and particularly so little Catherine. And they returned his affection. Three weeks before her death he had seen her for the last time.

In his letter to Miss Wordsworth he says :—"The children were speaking to me altogether, and I was saying one thing to one and another to another, and she, who could not speak loud enough to overpower the other voices, had got on a chair, and putting her hand upon my mouth, she said, with her sweet importunateness of action and voice, 'Kinsey, Kinsey, what a bring Katy from London?' I believe she said it twice ; and I remember that her mother noticed the earnestness and intelligence of her manner, and looked at me and smiled. This was the last time that I heard her sweet voice distinctly, and I shall never hear one like it again."

The death of Catherine was followed six months later by that of her brother Thomas, six and a half years old. This double affliction made the Wordsworths glad to remove from the neighbourhood of the churchyard, which so constantly reminded them of their loss. It was for this reason that, in 1813, they went to reside at Rydal Mount, which was thenceforth the home of Miss Wordsworth until her death—a period of more than forty years.

CHAPTER XIII.

REMOVAL TO RYDAL MOUNT.—DORA WORDSWORTH.

SINCE their settlement in Grasmere, the worldly circumstances of Wordsworth, as well as those of his sister, had considerably improved. We have seen upon what slender, combined means they began house-keeping, living in “noble poverty”—and were happy. Shortly afterwards the then Earl of Lonsdale honourably paid to the Wordsworths the large sum of money which, as has been before mentioned, had been withheld by his father. The share of each of them of this is said to have been about £1,800. In addition to this the poet’s muse had begun to be more profitable to him. Though he had not then been awarded that high and foremost rank in the inspired choir which he has since attained, yet his power as a great poet was beginning to be acknowledged by more than the select number who had from the first recognised his genius.

About this time he also had conferred upon him the appointment as distributor of stamps for Westmoreland. While the emoluments of this office formed a substantial addition to the poet’s income, its duties were such that they could be chiefly performed by deputy.

In obtaining for their new home the now classic RYDAL MOUNT, the good fortune of the Wordsworths did

not fail them. The "modest mansion" is well known, and many descriptions of it have been given. For the beauty of its situation, and the amenities of its surroundings, it is almost unsurpassed. It has been somewhere stated that whilst most persons, who, having chosen their own residences, think them the first, they are all ready to give the second place to Rydal Mount. I have on two occasions since the poet's death had the good fortune to obtain admittance to the grounds, and, with feelings of reverence and emotion, paced the terrace-walks, worn by the footsteps of the great departed. We are on such occasions strikingly reminded of the words of Foster: "What a tale could be told by many a room were the walls endowed with memory and speech." The house stands in an elevated position, being on a plateau on the south side of Nab Scar. Striking off from the side of the house is a walk called the Upper Terrace. From this path the views are exceedingly lovely. Immediately in front is the Rothay Valley, backed by the richly-wooded heights of Loughrigg, with Windermere in the distance to the left, "a light thrown into the picture in the winter season, and in the summer a beautiful feature, changing with every hue of the sky." About halfway along the terrace we come to a rustic alcove, built of fir poles, and lined with cones. Here, we should think, the walk ends, for we are parallel with the boundary wall of the garden below; but opening a door, we find the road branches slightly to the right, and, opening into the far terrace, reveals a surprise view. Here we see beneath us Rydal Water, gemmed with its romantic islands, and beyond, the

green heights of Loughrigg Terrace. Following the path, with its sloping banks of fern and flowers, for about fifty yards, we find it terminated by a little wicket-gate, which opens upon a field, whence the old, and now grass-green, road to Grasmere is reached. On the left side of the Upper Terrace is a dwarf wall, niched with ferns and mosses. Below this wall is another terrace—a level one—formed by the poet himself, chiefly for the sake of Miss Fenwick, who was a valued friend, and, in after years, an inmate at Rydal Mount. To her the poet dictated the MSS. notes upon his poems, referred to in the “Memoirs,” and elsewhere, as the “MSS. I. F.”

In speaking of the nocturnal aspect of Rydal Mount, Wordsworth mentions “the beauty of the situation, its being backed and flanked by lofty fells, which bring the heavenly bodies to touch, as it were, the earth upon the mountain tops, while the prospect in front lies open to a length of level valley, the extended lake, and a terminating ridge of low hills.”

A poetical description of this chosen retreat, by Miss Jewsbury, and published in the *Literary Magnet*, for 1826, may be quoted here:—

“THE POET’S HOME.”

“Low and white, yet scarcely seen,
Are its walls for mantling green;
Not a window lets in light,
But through flowers clustering bright;
Not a glance may wander there,
But it falls on something fair;

Mr. Wordsworth's friend?

Garden choice, and fairy mound,
Only that no elves are found ;
Winding walk, and sheltered nook,
For student grave and graver book :
Or a bird-like bower, perchance,
Fit for maiden and romance.
Then, far off, a glorious sheen
Of wide and sunlit waters seen ;
Hills that in the distance lie,
Blue and yielding as the sky ;
And nearer, closing round the nest,
The home of all the 'living crest,'
Other rocks and mountains stand,
Rugged, yet a guardian band,
Like those that did, in fable old,
Elysium from the world enfold.

“ Companions meet
Thou shalt have in thy retreat :
One of long-tried love and truth ;
Thine in age as thine in youth ;
One, whose locks of partial grey,
Whisper somewhat of decay ;
Yet whose bright and beaming eye
Tells of more that cannot die.

“ Then a second form beyond,
Thine, too, by another bond,
Sportive, tender, graceful, wild—
Scarcely woman, more than child—
One who doth thy heart entwine,
Like the ever-clinging vine ;

One to whom thou art a stay,
As the oak that, scarred and grey,
Standeth on, and standeth fast,
Strong and stately to the last.

“Poet’s lot like this hath been ;
Such, perchance, may I have seen ;
Or in fancy’s fairy land,
Or in truth, and near at hand :
If in fancy, then, forsooth,
Fancy had the force of truth ;
If, again, a truth it were,
Then were truth as fancy fair ;
But, which ever it might be,
‘ ’Twas a Paradise to me.’ ”

Of the “companions meet” referred to above it is evident that the first-named “of long-tried love and truth” is Miss Wordsworth ; the second, Mrs. Wordsworth ; and the third, Miss Dora Wordsworth, the poet’s daughter, to whom some further reference should now be made.

At the time of the removal to Rydal Mount, in the spring of 1813, the family, in addition to the parents and Miss Wordsworth, consisted of three children, of whom the second—Dorothy, or Dora, born in 1804—was of the interesting age of nine years. She was named after her aunt, Miss Wordsworth ; for, although her father would have preferred to have called her Mary, the name Dorothy, as he stated to Lady Beaumont, had been so long devoted in his own thoughts to the first

daughter he might have, he could not break his promise to himself. By way of further distinguishing her from her aunt, Mr. Crabb Robinson used to call her Dorina. To this surviving daughter, as she grew up to womanhood, Wordsworth was passionately attached. Inheriting as she did, in no slight degree, the family genius, he seemed to see reproduced in her a harmonious blending of the characteristics and mental lineaments of his wife and sister, the two beings in the world whom he had most devotedly loved.

Wordsworth's later poems contain several allusions to Dora. In this place I will quote a stanza or two only, from one, entitled "The Triad," written in celebration of Edith Southey, Dora Wordsworth, and Sara Coleridge :—

“ Open, ye thickets ! let her fly,
Swift as a Thracian Nymph o'er field and height !
For She, to all but those who love her, shy,
Would gladly vanish from a Stranger's sight ;
Though where she is beloved and loves,
Light as the wheeling butterfly she moves ;
Her happy spirit as a bird is free,
That rifles blossoms on a tree,
Turning them inside out with arch audacity.
Alas ! how little can a moment show
Of an eye where feeling plays
In ten thousand dewy rays ;
A face o'er which a thousand shadows go !
—She stops—is fastened to that rivulet's side ;
And there (while, with sedate mien,

O'er timid waters that have scarcely left
Their birth-place in the rocky cleft,
She bends) at leisure may be seen
Features to old ideal grace allied,
Amid their smiles and dimples dignified—
Fit countenance for the soul of primal truth :
The bland composure of eternal youth !

“What more changeful than the sea ?
But over his great tides
Fidelity presides ;
And this light-hearted Maiden, constant is as he.
High is her aim as heaven above,
And wide as ether her good-will ;
And, like the lowly reed, her love
Can drink its nurture from the scantiest rill :
Insight as keen as frosty star
Is to *her* charity no bar,
Nor interrupts her frolic graces
When she is, far from these wild places,
Encircled by familiar faces.”

Writing of Dora Wordsworth, Miss Coleridge says :—
“There is truth in the sketch of Dora—poetic truth, though such as none but a poetic father would have seen. She was unique in her sweetness and goodness. I mean that her character was most peculiar—a compound of vehemence of feeling and gentleness, sharpness and lovingness, which is not often seen.”

CHAPTER XIV.

FRIENDS.—TOUR ON CONTINENT.

SOME reference more special than hitherto should be made to the more outer influences which entered into the life of Miss Wordsworth. Although so bound up in her brother, her life presented many sides, and her sympathies, as will have been seen, were by no means limited in their operation to the household circle. Her brother's friends were hers. Probably few have been more independent of outside friendships, and of society, than the family at Rydal; and at the same time few have been blessed with such genial and cultured associates.

We have seen how close had, for many years, been the companionship with Coleridge, whom Lamb has called "an archangel a little damaged"—Coleridge, the incomprehensible, versatile genius, poet, philosopher, theologian, metaphysician, and critic—of whom it has recently been said that "even in the dilapidation of his powers, due chiefly, if you will, to his own unthrifty management of them, we might, making proper deductions, apply to him what Mark Antony says of the dead Cæsar :—

‘ He was the ruins of the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of time.’ ”

Then we have the sedate and scholarly Southey, the brother-in-law of Coleridge, and both of whom, up to 1810, when Coleridge left the district, resided at Greta Hall, near Keswick. Charles and Mary Lamb, also, although they could seldom be lured from their beloved London, were, as we have seen, among the earliest friends of the Wordsworths, and their home generally the abode of Miss Wordsworth during her occasional visits to the metropolis. Charles Lloyd, of Brathay—the dreamy Quaker, and bosom friend of Lamb—also became a neighbour, and an esteemed friend. Later, we have seen De Quincey, the intellectual opium eater, whose growth seems to have been almost entirely in the direction of brain (and of whom Southey said he wished he was not so very little, and did not always forget his great coat !) received into the charmed circle ; Crabb Robinson, also, who, though not a writer himself, counted amongst his friends some of the most eminent literary men of the day. Professor Wilson, of Elleray, the physical and mental giant, who resided within, what was to the Wordsworths and himself, fair walking distance ; afterwards Hartley Coleridge, loving and lovable, who inherited no small portion of the poetic genius of his more illustrious father ; and Dr. Arnold, of Rugby fame, who settled almost within a stone's-throw of Rydal Mount, added to the *coterie* of men of genius, among whom, Wordsworth, from time to time, if not at the same time, moved as a revered master, added to the interest of this warm centre of intellectual activity.

Among many other sons of genius who should be

ranked as friends of Wordsworth was Haydon, the painter. He painted Wordsworth on several occasions, and introduced him into his famous picture of "Christ's Entry into Jerusalem." Of this Hazlitt said it was the "most like his drooping weight of thought and expression." Of this picture Haydon, in his autobiography, says: "During the progress of the picture of Jerusalem, I resolved to put into it (1816), in a side group, Voltaire, as a sneerer, and Newton, as a believer. I now (1817) put Hazlitt's head into my picture, looking at Christ as an investigator. It had a good effect. I then put in Keats into the background, and resolved to introduce Wordsworth, bowing with reverence and awe. . . .

The Centurion, the Samaritan Woman, Jairus and his daughter, St. Peter, St. John, Newton, Voltaire, the anxious mother of the penitent girl, and the girl blushing and hiding her face, many heads behind; in fact the leading groups were accomplished, when down came my health again, eyes and all." This painting, so enthusiastically received in England, was, unfortunately, sent to America, whence it has never returned. Haydon writes, under date September 23, 1831: "My 'Jerusalem' is purchased, and is going to America. Went to see it before it was embarked. It was melancholy to look, for the last time, at a work which had excited so great a sensation in England and Scotland. It was now leaving my native country for ever."

In speaking of the friends of the Wordsworths, some allusion should be made to others, who, if they were less widely known, were not less warmly appreciative of their worth, or less closely identified with them.

Sir George Beaumont, of Coleorton Hall, Leicestershire, was for many years a close friend and admirer; and from time to time we find Miss Wordsworth visiting there.

Among the ladies who, in after years, became closely intimate with the inmates of Rydal Mount were Mrs. Fletcher, herself a lady of some literary distinction, and her daughter Mary, afterwards Lady Richardson. For the sake chiefly of the society of the Arnolds and Wordsworths, Mrs. Fletcher—who speaks of a tea-party at Rydal Mount as “perhaps the highest point in man’s civilised life, in all its bearings”—became the purchaser of the little mountain farm of Lancrigg before-mentioned, so nearly identified with Miss Wordsworth’s Easedale rambles, and which she converted into the charming retreat it is at the present time. Miss Fenwick also, to whom the world owes the valuable notes upon the poems, dictated to her, at her urgent request, by the poet, after having, for very love of the Wordsworths, resided for some time in the neighbourhood, became, and was for many years, a resident at the Mount. From the recently-published autobiography of Sir Henry Taylor, we learn that this amiable lady, many years before she became an inmate at Rydal Mount, had stated she would be content to be a servant in that house, that she might hear the poet’s wisdom. Of the life of Miss Fenwick herself, Sir Henry says, it was “a life of love and beneficence, as nearly divine as any life upon earth that I have known, or heard of, or been capable of conceiving.”

From the time of taking up her abode at Rydal

Mount, the outward life of Miss Wordsworth was passed without much change. After the trials which had preceded, life in this ideal home appears to have been for many years unbroken by any sorrow. It is needless to say that Miss Wordsworth's close interest in her brother and his career, and in all the incidents of his life, never waned. A letter of Miss Wordsworth, which has recently been given to the world, written when "The White Doe of Rylstone" was about to be published (in 1815), shows that he and his work were still the first objects of her thought and affection. She writes: "My brother was very much pleased with your frankness in telling us that you did not perfectly like his poem. He wishes to know what your feelings were—whether the tale itself did not interest you, or whether you could not enter into the conception of Emily's character, or take delight in that visionary union which is supposed to have existed between her and the doe. Do not fear to give him pain. He is far too much accustomed to be abused to receive pain from it (at least, so far as he himself is concerned). My reason for asking you these questions is, that some of your friends, who are equally admirers of the 'White Doe,' and of my brother's published poems, think that *this* poem will sell on account of the story; that is, that the story will bear up those points which are above the level of the public taste; whereas the two last volumes—except by a few solitary individuals, who are passionately devoted to my brother's works—are abused by wholesale.

"Now, as his sole object in publishing this poem at present would be for the sake of the money, he would

not publish it if he did not think, from the several judgments of his friends, that it would be likely to have a sale. He has no pleasure in publishing—he even detests it; and if it were not that he is not over wealthy he would leave all his works to be published after his death.

} William himself is sure that the ‘White Doe’ will not sell or be admired, except by a very few at first, and only yields to Mary’s entreaties and mine. We are determined, however, if we are deceived this time to let him have his own way in future.”

The year 1820 was signalised by a lengthened tour on the Continent, including France, the Rhine, Italy, and Switzerland, in which Miss Wordsworth accompanied her brother and Mrs. Wordsworth, and their kinspeople—Mr. and Mrs. Monkhouse. Mr. Crabb Robinson was also of the party, and his diary contains some pleasant reminiscences of the tour. It is interesting to note such an entry as the following: “On the 5th September the Wordsworths went back to the Lake of Como, in order to gratify Miss Wordsworth, who *wished to see every spot which her brother saw in his first journey*—a journey made when he was young.” “The women wear black caps, fitting the head closely, with prodigious black gauze wings. Miss Wordsworth calls it the ‘butterfly cap.’”

The “Memorials of a Tour on the Continent,” published by Wordsworth, in 1822, did not constitute the only literary result of the tour. Mrs. and Miss Wordsworth kept a journal of events and impressions, which it is to be greatly regretted has not been published, notwithstanding the expressed desire of the poet to the

contrary. As a charming memorial of this interesting journey, it could not fail to prove of great interest.

Shortly after the publication of these poems we find the following letter written by Miss Wordsworth to Mr. Crabb Robinson :—

“ *3rd March, 1822.* ”

“ My brother will, I hope, write to Charles Lamb in the course of a few days. He has long talked of doing it ; but you know how the mastery of his own thoughts (when engaged in composition, as he has lately been) often prevents him from fulfilling his best intentions ; and since the weakness of his eyes has returned, he has been obliged to fill up all spaces of leisure by going into the open air for refreshment and relief to his eyes. We are very thankful that the inflammation, chiefly in the lids, is now much abated. It concerns us very much to hear so indifferent an account of Lamb and his sister ; the death of their brother no doubt has afflicted them much more than the death of any brother, with whom there had, in near neighbourhood, been so little personal or family communication, would afflict any other minds. We deeply lamented their loss, and wished to write to them as soon as we heard of it ; but it not being the particular duty of any one of us, and a painful task, we put it off, for which we are now sorry, and very much blame ourselves. They are too good and too confiding to take it unkindly, and that thought makes us feel it more. . . . With respect to the tour poems, I am afraid you will think my brother's notes not sufficiently copious ; prefaces he has none, except to the

poem on Goddard's death. Your suggestion as to the bridge at Lucerne set his mind to work ; and if a happy mood comes on he is determined even yet, though the work is printed, to add a poem on that subject. You can have no idea with what earnest pleasure he seized the idea, yet before he began to write at all, when he was pondering over his recollections, and asking me for hints and thoughts, I mentioned that very subject, and he then thought he could make nothing of it. You certainly have the gift of setting him on fire. When I named (before your letter was read to him) your scheme for next autumn his countenance flushed with pleasure, and he exclaimed : ' I'll go with him.' Presently, however, the conversation took a sober turn, and he concluded that the journey would be impossible ; ' and then,' said he, ' if you or Mary, or both, were not with me, I should not half enjoy it ; and that is impossible.' We have had a long and interesting letter from Mrs. Clarkson. Notwithstanding bad times, she writes in cheerful spirits, and talks of coming into the North this summer, and we really hope it will not end in talk, as Mr. Clarkson joins with her ; and, if he once determines, a trifle will not stop him. Pray read a paper in the *London Magazine* by Hartley Coleridge on the uses of the 'Heathen Mythology in Poetry.' It has pleased us very much. The style is wonderful for so young a man—so little of effort and no affectation.

“DOROTHY WORDSWORTH.”

The following extract from a letter written by Mr. Robinson, in June, 1825, shortly after Lamb's retirement

from the East India Office, will be of interest. He writes: "I have not seen the Lambs so often as I used to do, owing to a variety of circumstances. Nor can I give you the report you naturally looked for of his conduct at so great a change in his life. . . . The expression of his delight has been child-like (in the good sense of that word). You have read the 'Superannuated Man.' I do not doubt, I do not fear, that he will be unable to sustain 'the weight of chance desires.' Could he—but I fear he cannot—occupy himself in some great work requiring continued and persevering attention and labour, the benefit would be equally his and the world's. Mary Lamb has remained so well, that one might almost advise, or rather permit, a journey to them. But Lamb has no desire to travel. If he had, few things would give me so much pleasure as to accompany him. I should be proud of taking care of him. But he has a passion for solitude, he says, and hitherto he finds that his retirement from business has not brought leisure."

CHAPTER XV.

FURTHER INFLUENCE.

BEFORE alluding to the affliction which for many years darkened the later life of Miss Wordsworth, and gathering together some of the remaining threads of her history, it is fitting that something further should be said in relation to her sustained influence upon her brother and her devotion to him, although it is with a feeling of how impossible it is adequately to do this, or that the fruit of her dominant presence should ever be fully known.

Those who know Wordsworth, and who, recognising his commanding place in literature, have had their sympathies enlarged, their eyes opened to discern in Nature and Providence their boundless sources of satisfaction and delight—whose hearts have been expanded by his high and holy teaching—will be ready to recognise all the spiritual aids by which he was himself inspired. It would be unjust to others, who held high sway over his heart, to say that everything was due to his sister. At the same time it is manifest that she bore no insignificant part, and during his early life the largely predominant part in that work, and thus was to a great extent instrumental in introducing the new evangel of

song by which the century's literature has been uplifted. The elevating presence of such a woman, in the delightful and close relationship of sister, was to a man of Wordsworth's character, itself an inspiration. If it be good to learn to look on Nature with a reverential eye, seeing therein the Creation of God brought near, then to this poet, as Nature's high priest and interpreter is due the gratitude of generations.

As the close companion and stimulator of this great poet during the years of preparation and discipline, who "first couched his eye to the sense of beauty," we owe it indirectly to Miss Wordsworth that Nature has become to us so much more than she was to our forefathers, has been revealed in a clearer and brighter light; that she speaks to us in a new language, calling us away from the lower cares of life, and uplifting us to a higher soul-inbreathing and restoring atmosphere of repose; thus begetting a dignity of soul and making us capable of higher good, of nobler endeavour, of capacities for enjoyment before unknown—keener, more satisfying, and enduring.

Probably few natures are capable of receiving the more subtle impressions of beauty in such a way as was that of Wordsworth, and fewer still meet with the responsive soul able to touch them to the finest issues. His boyhood's mind had been impregnated with thought, and his young heart bounded with delight amid the beauties of earth. His sister came, and together they seemed to possess the earth. His powers of perception were intensified and rarified. The solitudes of Nature became their home, their hearts grew still amidst its

loveliness : the solemn night breathed a benediction.
They loved

“The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.”

Shall we not say that, viewed in this way, the earth becomes almost as an ante-chamber of Heaven, subduing, and awe-inspiring, leading us to

“Move along its shades,
In gentleness of heart ; with gentle hand
Touch—for there is a spirit in the woods.”

“What a life there is in trees,” said Miss Wordsworth ; and her own life was one not only helping to reveal the living speech of the mute world, not only finding life where it is by the duller eye unseen, and by the dull sense unfelt, but helping to show what a noble thing all life may be made.

It must not be supposed that in what may seem to have been a complete abandonment to the worship of her brother and of Nature Miss Wordsworth had no heart for others, no room for human sympathy. She was, on the contrary, during their early years at Grasmere especially, widely known and beloved ; her ready ear was always open to the tale of sorrow, and her helping hand ready to aid. It was after the commencement of her long and tedious illness that Wordsworth said of her he did not believe her tenderness of heart was ever exceeded by any of God's creatures, that her loving-kindness had no bounds. The following lines written by Mrs. Fletcher, when 82 years of age, after

reading Miss Wordsworth's Grasmere journal, are very appropriate :—

“ If in thine inmost soul there chance to dwell
Aught of the poetry of human life,
Take thou this book, and with a humble heart
Follow these pilgrims in their joyous walk ;
And mark their high commission—not to domes
Of pomp baronial, or gay fashion's haunts,
Where worldlings gather ; but to rural homes,
To cottages and hearths, where kindness dwelt,
They bent their way ; and not a gentle breeze
Inhaled in all their wanderings, not a flower,
Blooming by hedge-wayside, or mountain rill,
But lent its inspiration, scent, and sound,
Deepening the inward music of their hearts.
She touched the chord, and he gave forth its tone ;
Without her he had idly gazed and dreamed,
In fancy's region of celestial things ;
But *she*—by sympathy disclosed the might,
That slumbered in his soul, and drew it thence,
In richest numbers of subduing power,
To soften, harmonise, and soothe mankind ;
Nor less to elevate, and point the way
To truth Divine—not with polemic skill,
He sought from Nature and the human heart,
That sacred wisdom from the fount of God.”

It has been well said that with a masculine power of mind Miss Wordsworth “had every womanly virtue, and presented with those splendid gifts such a rare combination, that even the enthusiastic strains in which

her brother sang her praises borrowed no aid from his poetic imagination. It was she who in childhood moderated the sternness of his moody temper, and she carried on the work which she had begun. His chief delight had been in scenes which were distinguished by terror and grandeur, and she taught him the beauty of the simplest products and mildest graces of Nature ; while she was softening his mind she was elevating herself ; and out of this interchange of gifts grew an absolute harmony of thought and feeling." What was originally harsh in Wordsworth was toned by the womanly sweetness of his sister, and his spirit softened by her habitual delicacy of thought and act. Not only so, but with a devotion (I will not say self-sacrifice, for it was none) as rare as it is noble, she simply dedicated to him her life and service, living in and for him. She read for him, saw for him, and heard for him ; found subjects for his reflection, and was always at hand—his willing scribe. Rejecting for herself all thoughts of love and marriage, she gave to him and his her mature life as willingly and cheerfully as when he was alone and unfriended, she had done her bright girlhood. With a mental capacity and literary skill, which would have enabled her to carve out for herself an independent reputation and position of no mean order, she preferred to sink herself, and her future, in that of her brother, with whom she has thus become, for all time, so indelibly associated. And he was grateful, and returned her devotedness with a love, tender, and almost reverential. One other allusion to her in his poems should be given. It may be thought that his praise of

her is exaggerated ; but none so well as he himself knew the extent of his obligation to her—and he was not one to bestow praise for the sake only of poetic effect. Writing in the “Prelude,” he says :—

“ Child of my parents ! Sister of my soul !
Thanks in sincerest verse have been elsewhere
Poured out for all the early tenderness
Which I from thee imbibed : and 'tis most true
That later seasons owed to thee no less ;
For, spite of thy sweet influence, and the touch
Of kindred hands that opened out the springs
Of genial thought in childhood, and in spite
Of all that, unassisted, I had marked
In life, or Nature, of those charms minute,
That win their way into the heart by stealth ;
Still, to the very going out of youth,
I too exclusively esteemed *that* love,
And sought *that* beauty, which, as Milton sings,
Hath terror in it. But thou didst soften down
This over-sternness ; but for thee, dear Friend !
My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood
In her original self too confident,
Retained too long a countenance severe ;
A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
Familiar, and a favourite of the stars :
But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
And teach the little birds to build their nests
And warble in its chambers. At a time
When Nature, destined to remain so long

Foremost in my affections, had fallen back
Into a second place, pleased to become
A handmaid to a nobler than herself,
When every day brought with it some new sense
Of exquisite regard for common things ;
And all the earth was budding with these gifts
Of more refined humanity ; thy breath,
Dear Sister ! was a kind of gentler spring,
That went before my steps."

It has, by some, been stated, in the way of objection, that Wordsworth was not a Christian poet, that he looked too exclusively to Nature as his inspirer and guide, and sought from her the consolation which Christianity alone can afford. His friend and admirer, Professor Wilson, states that all his poetry, published previously to the "Excursion," is but the "Religion of the Woods"; and that though in that poem there is a high religion brought forward, it is not the religion of Christianity. But it must be admitted that although a large proportion of the poetry of Wordsworth does not contain any specific Christian teaching, yet it breathes the spirit of devotion and of Christian charity. Some of the earlier poems, especially the lines composed at Tintern Abbey, have been referred to as evidence, that at the shrine of Nature alone Wordsworth, in his earlier, and presumably wiser, years worshipped. As this subject has been more than once exhaustively dealt with, it is not now necessary to do more than mention it. It should be remembered, that the same pen which wrote what have been styled the pantheistic poems, also wrote the Ecclesiastical

Sonnets, the Ninth Evening Voluntary, and the Thanksgiving Odes. What is much more needed by the heart of mankind than specific Christian doctrine, is the high and holy teaching with which the works of Wordsworth abound. His work was most conscientious, ever done under the "eye that hath kept watch o'er man's mortality." If lessons of endurance and fortitude under the ills and privations of life, and faith in the future, are needed, we have them taught us in such poems as that containing the story of the poor leech gatherer; if storms of passion and suffering are to be allayed, we are reminded of "the sure relief of prayer," and the advice given to the Solitary to aid in the restoration of a lost trust and hope :

" One adequate support
 For the calamities of mortal life
 Exists—one only : an assured belief
 That the procession of our fate, however
 Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
 Of infinite benevolence and power ;
 Whose everlasting purposes embrace
 All accidents, converting them to good.
 —The darts of anguish ~~fix~~ not where the seat
 Of suffering hath been thoroughly fortified
 By acquiescence in the Will supreme
 For time and for eternity ; by faith,
 Faith absolute in God, including hope,
 And the defence that lies in boundless love
 Of His perfections ; that habitual dread
 Of aught unworthily conceived, endured

Impatiently, ill done, or left undone,
To the dishonour of His holy name.
Soul of our Souls, and safeguard of the world !
Sustain, thou only canst, the sick of heart ;
Restore their languid spirits, and recall
Their lost affections unto Thee and Thine ! ”

If Wordsworth and his sister in their early life seem to have too exclusively glorified Nature, it cannot with any shadow of reason be said that they were at any period devoid of that faith and trust in the Creator through which we receive Nature's most beneficent lessons. It is, indeed, noticeable that during their Scottish tour no difference seems to have been made in the days of the week—that their Sundays were spent in travel. Such a thing is certainly to be regretted, which in after years probably no one would have been more ready than they to acknowledge. Thus the last entry in that journal—one made after an interval of many years—we find as follows : October 4th, 1832.—“ I find that this tour was both begun and ended on a Sunday. I am sorry that it should have been so, though I hope and trust that our thoughts and feelings were not seldom as pious and serious as if we had duly attended a place devoted to public worship. My sentiments have undergone a great change since 1803 respecting the absolute necessity of keeping the Sabbath by a regular attendance at church.—D. W.” It cannot be doubted that the feeling which dictated those words marks a distinct advance. { I doubt not that Miss Wordsworth was able to worship the Creator as devoutly on the green slope of a sun-

crowned mountain or in the solemn woods, murmuring their eternal mysterious secrets, as in the public assembly of saints. And such would be in accord with the glow of youthful life with which she bounded to greet Nature's subtle influences. But a longer experience brought its inevitable sobering tendencies, accompanied by the longing for a closer approach towards the Infinite which is felt by all searching and great souls. Wordsworth could truly say, in view of his work, that it was a consolation to him to feel that he had never written a line which he could wish to blot. To this happy and rare result his sister contributed. Remembering the exalted character of that work, there is no other conclusion than that she had no mean part in a work, the issues of which were beneficial not only for time—adding to the sweet influences and graces of life—but will be far-reaching as eternity.

In illustration of Miss Wordsworth's own literary style, I take the liberty to insert in later chapters a few poems which have been deemed worthy to have a place with those of her brother, as well as a journal of a tour on Ullswater. What most in her journals arrests the attention is her unusual quickness and minuteness of observation, combined with a graceful and poetic diction. With her ardent love of Nature, nothing seems to have escaped her notice ; and all the varying shades of beauty in earth and sky, which, to the observant eye and loving heart, invest with such a glory this old world, were duly appreciated. Describing a birch tree, she says : " As we went along we were stopped at once, at a distance of, perhaps, fifty yards from our favourite birch tree. It

was yielding to a gust of wind, with all its tender twigs ; the sun shone upon it, and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape, with stem and branches ; but it was like a spirit of water." Noticing a number of daffodils near Ullswater, she writes : "When we were in the woods below Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the water side. As we went along there were more and yet more ; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw there was a long belt of them along the shore. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about them. Some rested their heads on these stones as on a pillow ; the rest tossed, and reeled, and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, they looked so gay and glancing." These daffodils suggested to her brother one of the most beautiful of his short poems, that which has been previously quoted, commencing

"I wandered lonely as a cloud."

Of this description of Miss Wordsworth Mr. Lockhart says : "Few poets ever lived who could have written a description so simple and original, so vivid and picturesque. Her words are scenes, and something more."

Miss Wordsworth was for many years a great correspondent, and it is to be regretted that more of her letters have not been given to the world. From those quoted in this volume it will be seen that they exhibit the same fluent, graceful, and animated style which characterised all her productions.

“I have seen
That reverent form bowed down with age and pain,
And rankling malady. . Yet not for this
Ceased she to praise her Maker, or withdraw
Her trust in Him, her faith, and humble hope ;
So meekly had she learnt to bear her cross—
For she had studied patience in the school
Of Christ ; much comfort she had thence derived,
And was a follower of the NAZARENE.” LAMB.

“So fails, so languishes, grows dim and dies,
All that the world is proud of.”

CHAPTER XVI.

ILLNESS AND LAST YEARS.

REFERENCE must now be made, however reluctantly, to the sad illness with which Miss Wordsworth was more or less afflicted for over twenty years. At this distance of time particulars as to the commencement and progress of this affliction are not easily procurable. It appears, however, to have been about the year 1826 that her splendid physical energies began to show signs of decay. In October of that year Mr. Crabb Robinson, after mentioning a visit to Southey at Keswick, wrote in his diary: "Miss D. Wordsworth's illness prevented me going to Rydal Mount." From this illness it is, however, evident she successfully rallied. I am indebted to *Notes and Queries* for the following extract from a letter by Miss Dora Wordsworth, dated 1st February, 1827: "Aunt Wordsworth has not yet walked herself to death, which I often tell her she will do, though she still continues the same tremendous pedestrian." Here we have the key to the cause of her subsequent prostration. From her ardent and impassioned nature her career had been what may be termed singularly intense. De Quincey, who knew her well, speaks of there being clearly observable in her "a self-consuming style of thought." Both as regards her

mental and physical nature, she appears to have run a race with time. As her brother's companion, she had indeed been so exclusively and passionately devoted to him as to identify herself not only with his mental pursuits, but also, probably more than wisely, with his long pedestrian and mountain rambles. If it were not that the great work of her life was so signally achieved, and her satisfaction therein abundant, we should be inclined to regret that she thus drew an over-draft on the fountains of her life. It could not be expected that her frailer frame could sustain, without any mischievous effects, the physical fatigues and labours of her more robust brother; for with him she was ever ready to explore the mountain force, to climb the rocky heights, or walk over moor and fell apparently almost regardless of distance. Within due limits, no doubt all this is as healthful as it is delightful. But Nature's powers are limited; and Nature in Miss Wordsworth eventually gave way. And her spirits suffered in sympathy with her physical nature.

As an illustration of Miss Wordsworth's home rambles and adventures, I may here mention a reminiscence which is given by Mr. Justice Coleridge, of an excursion made with Wordsworth into Easedale. The poet, pointing to a precipitous and rocky mountain above the tarn, told of an incident which befell him and his sister on one occasion on their coming over the mountains from Langdale. From some cause they had become a little parted, when a heavy fog came on and Miss Wordsworth became bewildered. After wandering about for some time she sat down and waited. When the fog

cleared away and she could see the valley before her, she found that she had stopped very providentially, as she was standing almost on the verge of the precipice.

It is not, however, to be supposed that Miss Wordsworth accompanied her brother over the 200,000 miles which De Quincey calculated the poet must have walked, nor is it stated by what means the figures are arrived at! A twenty or thirty miles walk was not an uncommon thing. As an instance, I find it stated that one summer afternoon, as the Keswick coach was approaching Grasmere, it met Wordsworth, and stopped. A lady, who was going on a visit to the poet, put out her head to speak to him, whereupon he said to her: "How d'ye do? Mrs. Wordsworth will be delighted to see you. I shall be back in the evening. I'm only going to tea with Southey," who, it will be remembered, lived at a distance of about fifteen miles, and the road by no means a good one.

It is stated by Principal Shairp, in the introduction to the "Tour in Scotland," that in the year 1829 Miss Wordsworth "was seized with a severe illness, which so prostrated her, body and mind, that she never recovered from it." This can, however, hardly be the fact, as is evidenced by the following letter to Mr. Crabb Robinson, which certainly shows no indication of mental prostration, and contains no allusion to a physical one:—

"Friday, December 1st, 1831.

"Had a rumour of your arrival in England reached us before your letter of yesterday's post you would ere this have received a welcome from me, in the name of each

member of this family ; and, further, would have been reminded of your promise to come to Rydal as soon as possible after again setting foot on English ground. When Dora heard of your return, and of my intention to write, she exclaimed after a charge that I would recall to your mind your written promise : ‘ He must come and spend Christmas with us. I wish he would ! ’ Thus you see, notwithstanding your petty jarrings, Dora was always, and now is, a loving friend of yours. I am sure I need not add that if you can come at the time mentioned, so much the more agreeable to us all, for it is fast approaching ; but that *whenever* it suits you (for you may have Christmas engagements with your own family) to travel so far northward, we shall be rejoiced to see you ; and whatever other visitors we may chance to have, we shall always be able to find a corner for you. We are thankful that you are returned with health unimpaired—I may say, indeed, amended—for you were not perfectly well when you left England. You do not mention rheumatic pains, so I trust they have entirely left you. As to your being grown older—if you mean *feebler* in mind—my brother says, ‘ No such thing ; your judgment has only attained autumnal ripeness. ’ Indeed, my dear friend, I wonder not at your alarms, or those of any good man, whatever may have been his politics from youth to middle age, and onward to the decline of life. But I will not enter upon this sad and perplexing subject. I find it much more easy to look with patience on the approach of pestilence, or any affliction which it may please God to cast upon us without the intervention of man, than

on the dreadful results of sudden and rash changes, whether arising from ambition, or ignorance, or brute force. I am, however, getting into the subject without intending it, so will conclude with a prayer that God may enlighten the heads and hearts of our men of power, whether Whigs or Tories, and that the madness of the deluded people may settle. This last effect can only be produced, I fear, by exactly and severely executing the law, seeking out and punishing the guilty, and letting all persons see that we do not *willingly* oppress the poor. One possible blessing seems already to be coming upon us through the alarm of the cholera. Every rich man is now obliged to look into the bye-lanes and corners inhabited by the poor, and many crying abuses are (even in our little town of Ambleside) about to be remedied.

“But to return to pleasant Rydal Mount, still cheerful and peaceful—if it were not for the newspapers we should know nothing of the turbulence of our great towns and cities; yet my poor brother is often heart-sick and almost desponding—and no wonder, for, until this point at which we are arrived, he has been a true prophet as to the course of events, dating from the ‘Great Days of July’ and the appearance of ‘the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill.’ It remains for us to hope that now Parliament may meet in a different temper from that in which they parted, and that the late dreadful events may make each man seek only to promote the peace and prosperity of the country. You will see that my brother looks older. He is certainly thinner, and has lost some of his teeth; but his bodily activity is not

at all diminished, and if it were not for public affairs, his spirits would be as cheerful as ever. He and Dora visited Sir Walter Scott just before his departure, and made a little tour in the Western Highlands; and such was his leaning to old pedestrian habits, that he often walked from fifteen to twenty miles in a day, following or keeping by the side of the little carriage, of which his daughter was the charioteer. They both very much enjoyed the tour, and my brother actually brought home a set of poems, the product of that journey. . . .”

It was not, however, long after the date of this letter, which shows that Miss Wordsworth was still in possession of her vigorous and clear intellect, that she was seized with a more severe illness. Her growing weakness was, in the year 1832, accompanied by an alarming attack of brain fever, from the effects of which she never altogether recovered. Mr. Myers states that the illness “kept her for many months in a state of great prostration, and left her, when the physical symptoms abated, with her intellect painfully impaired, and her bright nature permanently overclouded.”

In June, 1833, Mr. Crabb Robinson again writes in his diary: “Strolled up to Rydal Mount, where I met with a cordial reception from my kind friends; but Miss Wordsworth I did not see. I spent a few hours very delightfully, and enjoyed the improved walk in Mr. Wordsworth’s garden, from which the views are admirable; and had most agreeable conversation, with no other drawback than Miss Wordsworth’s absence from the state of her health.”

Wordsworth himself felt very keenly the affliction of his sister. Writing to his brother, the Rev. Dr. Wordsworth, on April 1, 1832, he says: "Our dear sister makes no progress towards recovery of strength. She is very feeble, never quits her room, and passes most of the day in, or upon, the bed. She does not suffer much pain, and is very cheerful, and nothing troubles her but public affairs and the sense of requiring so much attention. Whatever may be the close of this illness, it will be a profound consolation to you, my dear brother, and to us all, that it is borne with perfect resignation; and that her thoughts are such as the good and pious would wish. She reads much, both religious and miscellaneous works."

On June 25 of the same year, writing to Professor Hamilton, after referring to Coleridge, he says: "He and my beloved sister are the two beings to whom my intellect is most indebted, and they are now proceeding, as it were, *pari passu*, along the path of sickness, I will not say towards the grave; but I trust towards a blessed immortality."

It does not, however, appear that all hope was abandoned of Miss Wordsworth's recovery until the year 1836. In a note of his life dictated by the poet, after referring to the deaths of his two young children in 1812, he says: "We lived with no further sorrow till 1836, when my sister became a confirmed invalid."

The outward life of Miss Wordsworth was now at an end. Her condition became such that those who loved her so dearly could only hope to relieve her pain and cheer her lonely hours. The buoyancy of spirit and activity of limb which had so distinguished her young and

mature life ceased—had gradually given way to a decay of her physical energies, which was accompanied at times, and especially during her later years, by a consequent natural depression of spirit, or loss of mental elasticity. As years passed, what may be called the symptoms of mental decay became intensified. I am, however, inclined to think that by some writers too much prominence has been given to the deterioration of her intellect. Principal Shairp says: “It is sad to think that when the world at last knew him (Wordsworth) for what he was, the great original poet of the century, she who had helped to make him so was almost past rejoicing in it.” Mr. Howitt, writing while Miss Wordsworth was still living, said: “The mind of that beloved sister has for many years gone, as it were, before her, and she lives on in a second infancy, gratefully cherished in the poet’s home.”

The condition into which Miss Wordsworth had declined is not, however, an unusual one when a severe and protracted illness lays hold upon one advancing in years. The “nervous depression” or “nervous irritation” which clouded her later years, apart from the prostration of the body, was most manifest in the lapse of memory, which is frequently the case with those who have not, indeed, suffered the affliction of Miss Wordsworth. Her physical frame having succumbed to the overtaxing of her energies, as an almost natural consequence her mind lost its youthful buoyancy and brightness, and suffered in sympathy. An aged inhabitant of the district, who knew her from youth to age, a little time ago informed me that she could not be called low-

spirited, but that she became "a bit dull," adding that she always knew people, and was able to converse with them.

Meanwhile, in the poet's home and circle, the inevitable flight of time was bringing about other changes which tended to sadden the age of its inhabitants. Intimate friends were departing. Coleridge, the friend of his youth, who had, as before mentioned, left the district, and been resident in London, died in 1834, to be followed to the grave only a month later by the friend of both, the genial-hearted Charles Lamb. In 1835, also, to add to the sorrow caused by the confirmed affliction of Miss Wordsworth, the beloved sister of Mrs. Wordsworth, Miss Sarah Hutchinson, who had for many years alternately resided with them and her brother at Brinsop Court, Hereford, was added to the number of the loved and lost.

The year 1841 was brightened by the marriage of Miss Dora Wordsworth, the only surviving daughter of the poet. The event was not, however, to him one of unalloyed happiness. This daughter, having, for now some years, grown up to bright and happy womanhood, was his cherished companion, and in her his heart seemed to be bound up. She occupied in his later poems, to some extent, the same position that his sister did in his earlier. Mr. Edward Quillinan, who became the poet's son-in-law, was a gentleman of much literary culture and attainment. He was the author of several poems, reviews, and other works, and had the reputation of being the most accomplished Portuguese scholar in this country. He was an officer in the Dragoon Guards, and

had married for his first wife a daughter of Sir Egerton Brydges, Bart. Long an admirer of Wordsworth, he had become personally acquainted with him while his regiment was stationed in Penrith in 1820. Quitting the service in 1821 he settled at the village of Rydal, chiefly for the sake of the poet's society. Here he had in the following year the misfortune to lose his wife. Notwithstanding the close friendship which existed between them, Wordsworth did not like the idea of losing the companionship of his daughter. Sir Henry Taylor, in reference to this, says : "His love for his only daughter was passionately jealous, and the marriage which was indispensable to her peace and happiness was intolerable to his feelings. The emotions—I may say the throes and agonies of emotion—he underwent were such as an old man could not have endured without suffering in health, had he not been a very strong old man. But he was like nobody else—old or young. He would pass the night, or most part of it, in struggles and storms, to the moment of coming down to breakfast ; and then, if strangers were present, be as easy and delightful in conversation as if nothing was the matter. But if his own health did not suffer, his daughter's did, and this consequence of his resistance, mainly aided, I believe, by the temperate but persistent pressure exercised by Miss Fenwick, brought him at length, though far too tardily, to consent to the marriage."

The marriage took place in Bath, in May, 1841; and afterwards Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth and Miss Fenwick made a short tour to Alfoxden and other places so closely associated with the early life of Wordsworth and

his sister. Writing to Sir H. Taylor, Miss Fenwick says : —“ We had two perfect days for our visit to Wells, Alfoxden, &c. They were worthy of a page or two in the poet's life. Forty-two years, perhaps, never passed over any human head with more gain and less loss than over his. There he was again, after that long period, in the full vigour of his intellect, and with all the fervent feelings which have accompanied him through life ; his bodily strength little impaired, he, grey-headed, with an old wife and not a young daughter. The thought of what his sister, who had been his companion here, was then, and now is, seemed the only painful feeling that moved in his mind. He was delighted to see again those scenes (and they were beautiful in their kind) where he had been so happy—where he had felt and thought so much. He pointed out the spots where he had written so many of his early poems, and told us how they had been suggested.”

It was on the death of Southey, in 1843, that Wordsworth, then in his seventy-fourth year, was offered, and, after some hesitation, on account of his age, accepted the appointment of Poet Laureate—an office which has not been filled by a worthier man or greater poet.

But other trials were in store for his advancing years. The health of his daughter had for some years been delicate, and continued to be so after her marriage. In 1845 Mr. and Mrs. Quillinan sought the more genial clime of Spain and Portugal, where they remained until the summer of the following year. Of this tour Mrs. Quillinan published a journal, of which it has been said that it showed she “inherited no trivial measure of her

aunt's tastes and talents." It was hoped that by this means her health had been restored; but the hope proved to be short-lived. She gradually faded, and, to the great grief of all who knew her, died in 1847. The effect on the poet was most saddening. Sir Henry Taylor, referring to his cultivation of the muse in later years, says: "At his daughter's death, a silence, *as* of death, fell upon him; and though during the interval between her death and his own his genius was not at all times incapable of its old animation, I believe it never broke again into song."

To return to Miss Wordsworth. Mr. Crabb Robinson, in a reminiscence of the year 1835, writes: "Already her health had broken down. In her youth and middle age she had stood in somewhat the same relation to her brother William as poor Mary Lamb to her brother Charles. In her long illness she was fond of repeating the favourite small poems of her brother, as well as a few of her own. And this she did in so sweet a tone as to be quite pathetic. The temporary obscurations of a noble mind can never obliterate the recollections of its inherent and essential worth."

In December, 1843, Mr. Quillinan, writing to Mrs. Clarkson, refers to the pleasure with which they at Rydal had read Miss Martineau's "Life in a Sick Room," and adds: "When I said all the Rydalites, I should have excepted poor, dear Miss Wordsworth, who could not bear sustained attention to any book, but who would be quite capable of appreciating a little at a time." In a still later letter—one from Mr. Robinson to Miss Fenwick, in 1849—referring

to a visit paid to his friends at Rydal, he says :
“Poor Miss Wordsworth I found sunk still further in insensibility. By the bye, Mrs. Wordsworth says that almost the only enjoyment Wordsworth seems to feel is in his attendance on her, and that her death would be to him a sad calamity.” Lady Richardson has given the following pathetic reminiscence : “There is,” she says, “always something very touching in his way of speaking of his sister. The tones of his voice become very gentle and solemn, and he ceases to have that flow of expression, which is so remarkable in him in all other subjects. It is as if the sadness connected with her present condition was too much for him to dwell upon in connection with the past, although habit and the omnipotence of circumstances have made its daily presence less oppressive to his spirits. He said that his sister spoke constantly of their early days, but more of the years they spent together in other parts of England than those at Grasmere.”

To Miss Wordsworth the “sorrow’s crown of sorrow” came with the death in April, 1850, of the brother for whom she had lived and for whom she had done so much. Having attained his eightieth year, he caught a cold, which resulted in a bronchial attack. After lying for a few weeks in a state of exhaustion, the great soul passed to its everlasting rest, to swell the song of the eternal world.

Although cared for and dearly beloved by the survivors, the death of her brother seemed to snap the strong tie by which she was bound to life. In consequence of being herself confined to her room, she

was not able to witness the progress and end of her brother's illness. To the very last they had been so completely devoted to each other that when his death was communicated to her she was at first unable to realise it. When the truth at length dawned upon her, she gave utterance to the pathetic exclamation, that there was nothing left worth living for.

Miss Wordsworth, however, survived her brother by nearly five years. It is a satisfaction to know that even her latest years were not without gleams of brightness. Although, compared with her early mental vigour, there was visible a melancholy wreck of mind, it was chiefly the result of an uncertain and vanishing memory. She had, indeed, to the very last perfectly lucid intervals during which she was remarkably clear and quite herself. As a not uncommon result of loss of memory in aged people, she forgot near events, and was what might be termed somewhat childish. She could remember quite well what took place in her girlhood, while if asked what she had been doing or talking about an hour previously she would have no recollection of it.

During her latest years Miss Wordsworth was unable to read much, but would frequently amuse herself by reciting poetry and other scraps, which, learnt in previous years, she remembered wonderfully well. A casual observer, who might see the placid old lady, of fourscore years, wheeled on the terrace at Rydal Mount, her unwrinkled though somewhat pensive face framed by a full-bordered cap, would have no suggestion of the often vacant mind.

Although sometimes considerably depressed in spirits,

her tedious affliction was, on the whole, borne with exemplary Christian fortitude. It has been said that "her loving-kindness in health had known no bounds, and the sympathy she had ever felt for the sorrows of others was now rivalled by the patience with which she bore her own."

When the end at length came it was calm and tolerably painless. Taking cold early in the year 1855, her condition was aggravated by an attack of bronchitis, and her spirit left the worn-out frame on the 25th of January, in her eighty-third year.

Her remains were deposited in the peaceful churchyard of Grasmere, by the murmuring waters of a mountain stream, the same sacred spot of earth which contained those of her beloved brother, overshadowed by the same yew trees.

It was from her own choice—a choice decided and happy—that Miss Wordsworth was never married. De Quincey (who seems, by the way, to have had a pretty universal knowledge) informs us that she had several offers of marriage, and amongst them, to his knowledge, one from Hazlitt, all of which she decisively rejected. Although he speaks so confidently, it is probable that, with regard to Hazlitt, he was mistaken. With the exception of a visit to Nether Stowey, and a short stay in the Lake district some few years later, it does not appear that Hazlitt was brought into contact with the Wordsworths, or that the relations between them were at all familiar; and Hazlitt's grandson and biographer does not attach much importance to the statement. Miss Wordsworth had a far higher vocation. Her sacri-

Yes, one of the few who did.

fice, if it can be so called, to her brother was complete ; but her lot was not, therefore, less happy. Doubtless the duties of marriage and maternity, had the poet's prophecy concerning her been fulfilled, would have filled her life, in its maturity and decline, with cares and interests which would have contributed to the keeping of her mind in a condition of more continuous mental vigour and equipoise. But the one great object of her life had been accomplished. She had lived to know all slander and rancour, the effect of all spiteful reviews, lived down ; and—if not able fully to appreciate and rejoice in the fact—to see her brother, whom she had helped so much to perfect, universally acknowledged as a master of English song, occupying a foremost niche in the Temple of Fame—the greatest poet since Milton.

And, although her old age was somewhat overclouded, it cannot be considered altogether sad ; and it is not with thoughts of sadness that our reflections on such a beneficent career as hers should be closed.

If the latter portion of her life was overshadowed with gloom and sickness ; if the brightness of the morning and the serenity of noonday too early gave place to a long twilight upon which the shadows fell heavily, her bright and lucid intervals give abundant hope that gleams of gladness revisited the mind which, for so long, had been a “mansion for all lovely forms” treasured and garnered in her early years.

It is more befitting that we should turn away our thoughts from the intervening period of age and decay ; and that Dorothy Wordsworth should live in our minds

as she was in her eager-spirited and ardent youth, when in company with her beloved companion, she bounded over the familiar hills and roamed by the mountain streams, or by the household fire scanned the classic page—a youth of beauty, and buoyancy, and joy, because so full of love and goodness, of generous sympathy and unselfish devotion—a youth which she has since renewed, unclouded by any shade, in the same old society, and with the familiar love re-linked—in *Paradiso*.

If ever greeted to heaven

CHAPTER XVII.

A QUIET RESTING-PLACE.

A FEW words only are desirable to be added in reference to the surviving inmate of the home of which Miss Wordsworth was so long a cherished member. The poet's aged widow survived her husband and sister-in-law for some years. She was not solitary in her widowhood, but tenderly loved by devoted friends. Miss Joanna Baillie, writing to Mrs. Fletcher in the June succeeding the death of Wordsworth, says: "Many thanks to you for sending to us a copy of these lines" (the lines upon the companionship of Wordsworth and his sister, before mentioned), "and for letting us know how his excellent wife, Mrs. Wordsworth, bears up under her severe affliction. She was a mate worthy of him or any man, and his sister too, such a devoted noble being as scarcely any other man ever possessed."

Mrs. Fletcher's diary, under date, Sunday, the 7th May, 1854, contains the following entry: "Yesterday, Mrs. Davy brought Mrs. Wordsworth to dinner. It is always a pleasure to see the placid old age of dear Mrs. Wordsworth. Hers has been a life of duty, and it is now an old age of repose, while her affections are kept in constant exercise by the tender interest she takes in her grand-children."

During the last three years of her life Mrs. Wordsworth was blind ; and it is deeply pathetic to read how, in her last days, when her sightless eyes could no longer peruse the sacred page, she loved to feel with her trembling fingers a cross which she kept in her room, and which seemed to remind her of the Christian's hope. Her life of calm devotion and disinterested love, succeeded by an old age of resignation and peace, was brought to a serene close on the 17th of January, 1859.

Among the quiet resting-places of the dead, few, if any, are of deeper interest than the peaceful churchyard of Grasmere. Under the shadow of the everlasting hills "girded with joy," and by the banks of the murmuring stream singing in its onward course of hopes beyond the grave, it is a spot which affection would choose for its most tenderly loved. As "the Churchyard among the mountains," many of the annals of which are recorded in that grand philosophic poem, "The Excursion," it could not fail to draw thither the footsteps of the thoughtful. But there is one corner on approaching which we seem to feel more solemnised, to breathe more gently—where the footstep falls lighter and lingers longer. To us it is as sacred a nook as the shadowy corner of the famous Abbey where are laid England's greatest sons. The group of graves gathered there are not glorified by the "religious light" of storied windows, but they are warmed by summer suns, and covered with a garment of purity by winter snows, and over-shadowed by aged yews, which gently shower around them their peaceful and slumberous undersong.

In the south-east corner of this quiet God's Acre is to be found this cluster of graves, surrounded by an iron palisade, to each of which a history of more than common interest is attached. Behind the principal group are three short graves, two of which, being the first formed of the group, attract attention. These are the graves of little Catherine and Thomas Wordsworth, the children of the poet, whose early and sudden deaths have been mentioned. The stone indicating the resting-place of the "loving, and tractable, though wild," Catherine bears the inscription, "Suffer little children to come unto Me." That of her brother contains a few memorial lines recording at once his age and loving disposition :—

"Six months to six years added he remained
Upon this sinful earth, by sin unstained :
O blessed Lord ! Whose mercy then removed
A Child whom every eye that looked on loved ;
Support us, teach us calmly to resign
What we possessed, and now is wholly Thine !"

The next green mound, in point of date, is that which covers the remains of the first Mrs. Quillinan, who died on the 25th May, 1822, at the early age of twenty-seven years, six months after the birth of her second daughter. She was a daughter of the late Sir Egerton Brydges, Bart., of Denton Court, near Dover. There is in Grasmere Church a monument to her designed by Sir F. Chantrey.

Miss Sarah Hutchinson, the younger sister of Mrs. Wordsworth, who has been before mentioned, comes

next in this remarkable group. Spending, as she did, much of her time with the Wordsworths at Grasmere and Rydal Mount, she was devoted to all the members of the family. Being herself of poetic mould, the poet's home was most congenial to her. It was she, who, during a sickness, the year before her death, wrote the following lines to the Redbreast :—

“ Stay, cheerful little Robin! stay,
And at my casement sing,
Though it should prove a farewell lay
And this our parting spring.

“ Though I, alas! may ne'er enjoy
The promise in thy song;
A charm, *that* thought can not destroy,
Doth to thy strain belong.

“ Methinks that in my dying hour
Thy song would still be dear,
And with a more than earthly power
My passing Spirit cheer.

“ Then, little Bird, this boon confer,
Come, and my requiem sing,
Nor fail to be the harbinger
Of everlasting Spring.”

She died as before-mentioned in 1835. Her memorial stone states that she was the beloved sister and faithful friend of mourners, who had caused the stone to be erected, with the earnest wish that their remains might be laid by her side, and a humble hope that through Christ they might together be made partakers of the same

blessed resurrection. Twelve years afterwards the sod was again cut, to receive, not yet the aged poet or his wife, but their idolised daughter Dora, the devoted wife of Mr. Quillinan, who, in her forty-third year, after a brief period of wedded happiness, died on the 9th July, 1847. Upon the stone at the head of her grave is chiselled a lamb bearing a cross, and the consolatory words : "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

The poet himself was the next to be added to the group, and the slab, with the simple inscription "WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 1850," has been gazed upon by as many moistened eyes as the elaborate tombs of any of England's greatest heroes.

Mr. Edward Quillinan, who died in July, 1851, rests near the two beloved companions of his life.

The subject of this brief memoir—the most perfect sister the world hath known—after her sunny youth, her strong maturity, and her afflicted age, now sleeps in peace on the right side of the poet, to whom her self-denying life was devoted, her resting-place, to all who have heard her name being sufficiently indicated by the words

"DOROTHY WORDSWORTH,
1855."

In a few years more the poet's grave received to its shelter the tried and honoured partner of his long life, and the words were added : "Mary Wordsworth, 1859."

From this time there is a break of many years, when the enclosure received another member of the younger

generation. Miss Rotha Quillinan, named after the murmuring river, by the banks of which her life was spent, died on the 1st February, 1876. She was the younger daughter of Mr. Quillinan, and, apart from the subsequent relationship, had been an object of especial interest to the poet as his god-daughter. He wrote the following lines in her album :—

“Rotha, my Spiritual Child ! this head was grey
When at the sacred font for thee I stood :
Pledged till thou reach the verge of womanhood,
And shalt become thy own sufficient stay ;
Too late, I feel, sweet Orphan ! was the day
For stedfast hope the contract to fulfil ;
Yet shall my blessing hover o’er thee still,
Embodied in the music of this Lay,
Breathed forth beside the peaceful mountain Stream,
Whose murmur soothed thy languid Mother’s ear
After her throes, this Stream of name more dear
Since thou dost bear it—a memorial theme
For others ; for thy future self, a spell
To summon fancies out of Time’s dark cell.”

Her surviving sister still resides in the charming retreat at the foot of Loughrigg Fell, overlooking the vale of Ambleside, which had so long been the home of both.

The latest addition to the group was made so lately as the year 1883, when Mr. William Wordsworth, the last surviving son of the poet, was added to the number.

There is, however, one more grave, which, though not

within the enclosure, lies close behind it, and claims our notice. Hartley Coleridge, the eldest son of his more distinguished father, was for many years a familiar figure in the neighbourhood where he now rests. As a child, quiet, intelligent, and promising; as a youth, encouraging the hope that he was gifted with a genius which would lead to a career of no ordinary character; as a collegian, fulfilling the bright hopes of his friends, and attaining signal distinction;—his subsequent history affords one more instance of the fact that the greatest genius may by one failing be crippled, and the brightest promise be never followed by its full fruition. But this is not the place to recount his story. His published poems show that he inherited no small portion of his father's poetic ability. In his subsequently rather aimless life, he endeared himself not a little to the sympathetic inhabitants of the vale by his gentle, warm-hearted, and loving disposition. He was passionately fond of children, and would hardly pass through the village without taking a little one into his arms. For his father's sake, as well as his own, he was a favourite with the Wordsworths. It was by Mrs. Wordsworth, the friend of his infancy, that in his fifty-third year his relatives were summoned to his dying bed; and by Wordsworth himself (a year before his own death) his last resting-place was chosen. "Let him lie by us," said the aged poet, "he would have wished it;" adding to the sexton, "keep the ground for us—we are old people, and it cannot be for long."

The following sonnet may be given as a specimen of Hartley Coleridge's poetry, the closing line not inaptly

expressing the prayerful attitude with which he approached the eternal future.

“SHE LOVED MUCH.

“She sat and wept beside His feet. The weight
Of sin oppressed her heart ; for all the blame,
And the poor malice of the worldly shame,
To her was past, extinct, and out of date ;
Only the *sin* remained—the leprous state.
She would be melted by the heat of love,
By fires far fiercer than are blown to prove
And purge the silver ore adulterate.
She sat and wept, and with her untressed hair
Still wiped the feet she was so blest to touch ;
And He wiped off the soiling of despair
From her sweet soul, because she loved so much.
I am a sinner, full of doubts and fears,
Make me a humble thing of love and tears.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

POEMS.

MISS WORDSWORTH did not write much poetry. The few pieces she has left behind, though not of the highest order, are sufficient to show that had she devoted herself to it, she might have attained distinction. She was so devoted to her brother that she did not attempt for herself an independent position. She preferred to find subjects for the more skilful pen of her brother, and to act as his amanuensis. The poems that she did write, and which have been published with those of her brother, are worthy of a place here. The first of these, written in 1805, is—

“THE COTTAGER TO HER INFANT.

(Suggested to Miss Wordsworth when watching one of the Poet's Children.)

“The days are cold, the nights are long,
The north wind sings a doleful song;
Then hush again upon my breast;
All merry things are now at rest,
Save thee, my pretty Love!

“The kitten sleeps upon the hearth,
The crickets long have ceased their mirth;

There's nothing stirring in the house
Save one *wee*, hungry, nibbling mouse,
Then why so busy thou?

“Nay! start not at that sparkling light;
'Tis but the moon that shines so bright
On the window pane, bedropped with rain:
Then, little Darling! sleep again,
And wake when it is day.”

The following (written in 1806) has been described
by Charles Lamb as masterly:—

“ADDRESS TO A CHILD (DURING A BOISTEROUS WINTER
EVENING).

“What way does the Wind come? What way does he go?
He rides over the water, and over the snow;
Through wood and through vale; and o'er rocky height
Which the goat cannot climb, takes his sounding
flight;
He tosses about in every bare tree,
As, if you look up, you plainly may see;
But how he will come, and whither he goes,
There's never a scholar in England knows.
He will suddenly stop in a cunning nook,
And ring a sharp 'larum;—but, if you should look,
There's nothing to see but a cushion of snow
Round as a pillow, and whiter than milk,
And softer than if it were covered with silk.
Sometimes he'll hide in the cave of a rock,
Then whistle as shrill as the buzzard cock;

—Yet seek him,—and what shall you find in the place?
Nothing but silence and empty space ;
Save, in a corner, a heap of dry leaves,
That he's left, for a bed, to beggars or thieves !
As soon as 'tis daylight to-morrow, with me,
You shall go to the orchard, and then you will see
That he has been there, and made such a rout,
And cracked the branches, and strewn them about ;
Heaven grant that he spare but that one upright twig
That looked up at the sky so proud and big
All last summer, as well you know,
Studded with apples, a beautiful show !
Hark ! over the roof he makes a pause,
And growls as if he would fix his claws
Right in the slates, and with a huge rattle,
Drive them down, like men in a battle :
—But let him range round ; he does us no harm,
We build up the fire, we're snug and warm ;
Untouched by his breath, see the candle shines bright,
And burns with a clear and steady light ;
Books have we to read,—but that half-stifled knell,
Alas ! 'tis the sound of the eight o'clock bell.
—Come now, we'll to bed ! and when we are there,
He may work his own will, and what shall we care ?
He may knock at the door,—we'll not let him in ;
May drive at the windows,—we'll laugh at his din ;
Let him seek his own home, wherever it be ;
Here's a *cozie* warm house for Edward and me."

The next (also a child's poem), written in 1807, was composed on the eve of the return of Mrs. Wordsworth,

after a month's absence in London. Miss Wordsworth and the children were then staying at Coleorton :—

“ THE MOTHER'S RETURN.

“ A month, sweet little-ones, is past
Since your dear Mother went away,—
And she to-morrow will return ;
To-morrow is the happy day.

“ O blessed tidings ! thought of joy !
The eldest heard with steady glee ;
Silent he stood ; then laughed amain,—
And shouted, ‘ Mother, come to me ! ’

“ Louder and louder did he shout,
With witless hope to bring her near ;
‘ Nay, patience ! patience, little boy !
Your tender mother cannot hear.’

“ I told of hills, and far-off towns,
And long, long vales to travel through,—
He listens, puzzled, sore perplexed,
But he submits ; what can he do ?

“ No strife disturbs his sister's breast ;
She wars not with the mystery
Of time and distance, night and day ;
The bonds of our humanity.

“ Her joy is like an instinct—joy
Of kitten, bird, or summer fly ;
She dances, runs without an aim ;
She chatters in her ecstasy.

“ Her brother now takes up the note,
And echoes back his sister's glee ;
They hug the infant in my arms,
As if to force his sympathy.

“ Then, settling into fond discourse,
We rested in the garden bower ;
While sweetly shone the evening sun,
In his departing hour.

“ We told o'er all that we had done,—
Our rambles by the swift brook's side,
Far as the willow-skirted pool,
Where two fair swans together glide.

“ We talked of change, of winter gone,
Of green leaves on the hawthorn spray,
Of birds that build their nests and sing,
And all ‘ since Mother went away ! ’

“ To her these tales they will repeat,
To her our new-born tribes will show,
The goslings green, the ass's colt,
The lambs that in the meadow go.

“ —But see, the evening star comes forth !
To bed the children must depart ;
A moment's heaviness they feel,
A sadness at the heart :

“ 'Tis gone—and in a merry fit
They run upstairs in gamesome race ;
I, too, infected by their mood,
I could have joined the wanton chase.

“ Five minutes past—and, O the change !
Asleep upon their beds they lie ;
Their busy limbs in perfect rest,
And closed the sparkling eye.”

The following poem was written at Rydal Mount in 1832. Wordsworth has said he believed it arose out of a casual expression of one of Mr. Swinburne's children :—

LOVING AND LIKING : IRREGULAR VERSES, ADDRESSED
TO A CHILD.

“ There's more in words than I can teach ;
Yet listen, Child !—I would not preach ;
But only give some plain directions
To guide your speech and your affections.
Say not you *love* a roasted fowl,
But you may love a screaming owl,
And, if you can, the unwieldy toad
That crawls from his secure abode
Within the mossy garden wall
When evening dews begin to fall.
Oh mark the beauty of his eye :
What wonders in that circle lie !
So clear, so bright, our fathers said
He wears a jewel in his head !

“ And when upon some showery day,
Into a path or public way
A frog leaps out from bordering grass,
Startling the timid as they pass,
Do you observe him, and endeavour
To take the intruder into favour ;

Learning from him to find a reason
For a light heart in a dull season.
And you may love him in the pool,
That is for him a happy school,
In which he swims as taught by nature,
Fit pattern for a human creature,
Glancing amid the water bright,
And sending upward sparkling light.

“Nor blush if o’er your heart be stealing
A love for things that have no feeling :
The spring’s first rose by you espied
May fill your breast with joyful pride ;
And you may love the strawberry-flower,
And love the strawberry in its bower ;
But when the fruit, so often praised
For beauty, to your lip is raised,
Say not you *love* the delicate treat,
But *like* it, enjoy it, and thankfully eat.

“Long may you love your pensioner mouse,
Though one of a tribe that torment the house :
Nor dislike for her cruel sport the cat,
Deadly foe both of mouse and rat ;
Remember she follows the law of her kind,
And Instinct is neither wayward nor blind.
Then think of her beautiful gliding form,
Her tread that would scarcely crush a worm,
And her soothing song by the winter fire,
Soft as the dying throb of the lyre.

“I would not circumscribe your love :
It may soar with the eagle and brood with the
dove,

May pierce the earth with the patient mole,
Or track the hedgehog to his hole.
Loving and liking are the solace of life,
Rock the cradle of joy, smooth the death-bed of
 strife.

“You love your father and your mother,
Your grown-up and your baby-brother ;
You love your sister, and your friends,
And countless blessings which God sends :
And while these right affections play,
You *live* each moment of your day ;
They lead you on to full content,
And likings fresh and innocent,
That store the mind, the memory feed,
And prompt to many a gentle deed :
But *likings* come, and pass away ;
'Tis *love* that remains till our latest day :
Our heavenward guide is holy love,
And will be our bliss with saints above.”

The poem suggested by an island on Derwent-water, which is said to have been composed so late as the year 1842, shows that, if the date be correct, which is somewhat doubtful, Miss Wordsworth was at that time in full possession of her faculties. These lines, we are informed, she used to take pleasure in repeating during her last illness.

“ FLOATING ISLAND.

“ Harmonious Powers with Nature work
On sky, earth, river, lake, and sea ;
Sunshine and cloud, whirlwind and breeze,
All in one duteous task agree.

- “Once did I see a slip of earth
(By throbbing waves long undermined)
Loosed from its hold ; how, no one knew,
But all might see it float, obedient to the wind ;
- “Might see it, from the mossy shore
Dissevered, float upon the Lake,
Float with its crest of trees adorned
On which the warbling birds their pastime take.
- “Food, shelter, safety, there they find ;
There berries ripen, flowerets bloom ;
There insects live their lives, and die ;
A peopled world it is ; in size a tiny room.
- “And thus through many seasons’ space
This little Island may survive ;
But Nature, though we mark her not,
Will take away, may cease to give.
- “Perchance when you are wandering forth
Upon some vacant sunny day,
Without an object, hope, or fear,
Thither your eyes may turn—the Isle is passed away ;
- ‘Buried beneath the glittering Lake,
Its place no longer to be found ;
Yet the lost fragments shall remain
‘To fertilize some other ground.’”

CHAPTER XIX.

JOURNAL OF A TOUR AT ULLSWATER

A.D. 1805.

ON the 7th of November, on a damp and gloomy morning, we left Grasmere Vale, intending to pass a few days on the banks of Ullswater. A mild and dry autumn had been unusually favourable to the preservation and beauty of foliage ; and, far advanced as the season was, the trees on the larger island of Rydal Mere retained a splendour which did not need the heightening of sunshine. We noticed as we passed that the line of the grey rocky shore of that island, shaggy with variegated bushes and shrubs, and spotted and striped with purplish brown heath, indistinguishably blending with its image reflected in the still water, produced a curious resemblance, both in form and colour, to a richly-coated caterpillar, as it might appear through a magnifying glass of extraordinary power. The mists gathered as we went along : but when we reached the top of Kirkstone, we were glad we had not been discouraged by the apprehension of bad weather. Though not able to see a hundred yards before us, we were more than contented. At such a time, and in such a place,

every scattered stone the size of one's head becomes a companion.

Near the top of the Pass is the remnant of an old wall, which (magnified, though obscured, by the vapour) might have been taken for a fragment of some monument of ancient grandeur—yet that same pile of stones we had never before even observed. This situation, it must be allowed, is not favourable to gaiety; but a pleasing hurry of spirits accompanies the surprise occasioned by objects transformed, dilated or distorted, as they are when seen through such a medium. Many of the fragments of rock on the top and slopes of Kirkstone, and of similar places, are fantastic enough in themselves; but the full effect of such impressions can only be had in a state of weather when they are not likely to be sought for. It was not till we had descended considerably that the fields of Hartshop were seen, like a lake tinged by the reflection of sunny clouds. I mistook them for Brother's water, but soon after we saw that lake gleaming faintly with a steely brightness,—then as we continued to descend, appeared the brown oaks, and the birches of lively yellow, and the cottages, and the lowly Hall of Hartshop, with its long roof and ancient chimneys. During great part of our way to Patterdale we had rain, or rather drizzling vapour; for there was never a drop upon our hair or clothes larger than the smallest pearl upon a lady's ring.

The following morning incessant rain till eleven o'clock, when the sky began to clear, and we walked along the eastern shore of Ullswater towards the farm of Blowick. The wind blew strong, and drove the

clouds forwards on the side of the mountain above our heads:—two storm-stiffened, black yew-trees fixed our notice, seen through, or under the edge of, the flying mists, four or five goats were bounding among the rocks;—the sheep moved about more quietly, or cowered beneath their sheltering places. This is the only part of the country where goats are now found;* but this morning, before we had seen these, I was reminded of that picturesque animal by two rams of mountain breed, both with Ammonian horns, and with beards majestic as that which Michael Angelo has given to his study of Moses.—But to return; when our path had brought us to that part of the naked common which overlooks the woods and bush-besprinkled fields of Blowick, the lake, clouds, and mists were all in motion to the sound of sweeping winds;—the church and cottages of Patterdale scarcely visible, or seen only by fits between the shifting vapours. To the northward the scene was less visionary;—Place Fell steady and bold;—the whole lake driving onward like a great river—waves dancing round the small islands. The house at Blowick was the boundary of our walk; and we returned, lamenting to see a decaying and uncomfortable dwelling in a place where sublimity and beauty seemed to contend with each other. But these regrets were dispelled by a glance on the woods that clothe the opposite steeps of the lake. How exquisite was the mixture of sober and splendid hues! The general colouring of the trees was brown—rather that of ripe hazel-nuts; but towards the water there were yet bays of green, and in the higher

* They have since disappeared.

parts of the wood was abundance of yellow foliage, which, gleaming through a vapoury lustre, reminded us of masses of clouds, as you see them gathered together in the west, and touched with the golden light of the setting sun. After dinner we walked up the vale; I had never had an idea of its extent and width in passing along the public road on the other side. We followed the path that leads from house to house; two or three times it took us through some of those copses or groves that cover the little hillocks in the middle of the vale, making an intricate and pleasant intermixture of lawn and wood. Our fancies could not resist the temptation, and we fixed upon a spot for a cottage, which we began to build, and finished as easily as castles are raised in the air. Visited the same spot in the evening. I shall say nothing of the moonlight aspect of the situation which had charmed us so much in the afternoon; but I wish you had been with us when, in returning to our friend's house, we espied his lady's large white dog lying in the moonshine upon a round knoll under the old yew tree in the garden, a romantic image—and the elegant creature, as fair as a spirit! The torrents murmured softly: the mountains down which they were falling did not, to my *sight*, furnish a background for this Ossianic picture; but I had a consciousness of the depth of the seclusion, and that mountains were embracing us on all sides; "I saw not, but I *felt* that they were there."

Friday, November 9. — Rain, as yesterday, till ten o'clock, when we took a boat to row down the lake. The day improved; clouds and sunny gleams on the

mountains. In the large bay under Place Fell three fishermen were dragging a net — picturesque group beneath the high and large crags. A raven was seen aloft; not hovering like the kite, for that is not the habit of the bird, but passing on with a straightforward perseverance, and timing the motion of its wings to its own croaking. The waters were agitated, and the iron tone of the raven's voice, which strikes upon the ear at all times as the more dolorous from its regularity, was in fine keeping with the wild scene before our eyes. This carnivorous bird is a great enemy to the lambs of these solitudes. The fishermen drew their net ashore, and hundreds of fish were leaping in their prison. They were all of the kind called skellies, a sort of fresh water herring, shoals of which may sometimes be seen dimpling or rippling the surface of the lake in calm weather. This species is not found, I believe, in any other of these lakes; nor, as far as I know, is the chevin, that *spiritless* fish (though I am loth to call it so, for it was a prime favourite with Izaak Walton), which must frequent Ullswater, as I have seen a large shoal passing into the lake from the river Eamont. Here are no pike, and the char are smaller than those of the other lakes, and of inferior quality; but the grey trout attains a very large size, sometimes weighing above twenty pounds. This lordly creature seems to know that "retiredness is a piece of majesty," for it is scarcely ever caught, or even seen, except when it quits the depths of the lake in the spawning season, and runs up into the streams, where it is too often destroyed in disregard of the law of the land and of nature.

Quitted the boat in the bay of Sandwyke, and pursued our way towards Martindale, along a pleasant path—at first through a coppice bordering the lake, then through green fields—and came to the village (if village it may be called, for the houses are few, and separated from each other), a scattered spot, shut out from the view of the lake. Crossed the one-arched bridge, below the chapel, with its bare ring of mossy wall and single yew tree. At the last house in the dale we were greeted by the master, who was sitting at his door, with a flock of sheep collected round him, for the purpose of smearing them with tar (according to the custom of the season) for protection against the winter's cold. He invited us to enter and view a room, built by Mr. Hasell, for the accommodation of his friends at the annual chase of red deer in his forests, at the head of these dales. The room is fitted up in the sportsman's style, with a cupboard for bottles and glasses, strong chairs, and a dining-table; and ornamented with the horns of the stags caught at these hunts for a succession of years—the length of the last race each had run being recorded under his spreading antlers. The good woman treated us with oaten cake, new and crisp; and after this welcome refreshment and rest, we proceeded on our return to Patterdale by a short cut over the mountains. On leaving the fields of Sandwyke, while ascending up a gentle slope along the valley of Martindale, we had occasion to observe that in thinly-peopled glens of this character the general want of wood gives a peculiar interest to the scattered cottages embowered in sycamore. Towards its head this

valley splits into two parts ; and in one of these (that to the left) there is no house nor any building to be seen but a cattle-shed on the side of a hill, which is sprinkled over with trees, evidently the remains of an extensive forest. Near the entrance of the other division stands the house where we were entertained, and beyond the enclosures of that farm there are no other. A few old trees remain—relics of the forest ; a little stream hastens, though with serpentine windings, through the uncultivated hollow where many cattle were pasturing. The cattle of this country are generally white, or light-coloured ; but these were dark brown or black, which heightened the resemblance this scene bears to many parts of the Highlands of Scotland.

While we paused to rest on the hill-side, though well contented with the quiet every-day sounds—the lowing of cattle, bleating of sheep, and the very gentle murmuring of the valley stream—we could not but think what a grand effect the music of the bugle-horn would have among these mountains. It is still heard once every year at the chase I have spoken of—a day of festivity for the inhabitants of this district, except the poor deer, the most ancient of them all. Our ascent even to the top was very easy. When it was accomplished we had exceedingly fine views, some of the lofty fells being resplendent with sunshine, and others partly shrouded by clouds. Ullswater, bordered by black steeps, was of dazzling brightness ; the plain beyond Penrith smooth and bright, or rather gleamy, as the sea or sea-sands. Looked down into Boardale, which, like Skybarrow, has been named from the wild swine that formerly abounded

here ; but it has now no sylvan covert, being smooth and bare, a long, narrow, deep, cradle-shaped glen lying so sheltered, that one would be pleased to see it planted by human hand, there being a sufficiency of soil ; and the trees would be sheltered, almost like shrubs in a green-house. After having walked some way along the top of the hill, came in view of Glenridding, and the mountains at the head of Grisedale.—Before we began to descend, we turned aside to a small ruin, called at this day the chapel, where it is said the inhabitants of Martindale and Patterdale were accustomed to assemble for worship. There are now no traces from which you could infer for what use the building had been erected ; the loose stones, and the few that yet continued piled up, resemble those which lie elsewhere on the mountain ; but the shape of the building having been oblong, its remains differ from those of the common sheep-fold ; and it has stood east and west. Scarcely did the Druids, when they fled to these fastnesses, perform their rights in any situation more exposed to disturbance from the elements. One cannot pass by without being reminded that the rustic psalmody must have had the accompaniment of many a wildly-whistling blast ; and what dismal storms must have often drowned the voice of the preacher !

As we descend, Patterdale opens upon the eye in grand simplicity, screened by mountains, and proceeding from two heads—Deepdale and Hartshop—where lies the little lake of Brothers Water, named in old maps Broader Water, and probably rightly so ; for Bassenthwaite Mere at this side is familiarly called

Broad Water ; but the change in the appellation of this small lake or pool (if it be a corruption) may have been assisted by some melancholy incident, similar to what happened about twenty years ago, when two brothers were drowned there, having gone out to take their holiday-pleasure upon the ice on a New Year's Day.

A rough and precipitous peat-track brought us down to our friends house. Another fine moonlight night ; but a thick fog rising from the neighbouring river enveloped the rocky and wood-crested knoll on which our fancy cottage had been erected ; and, under the damp cast upon my feelings, I consoled myself with moralising on the folly of hasty decisions in matters of importance, and the necessity of having at least one's knowledge of a place before you realise airy suggestions in solid stone.

Saturday, November 10.—At the breakfast-table, tidings reached us of the death of Lord Nelson, and of the victory of Trafalgar. Sequestered as we were from the sympathy of a crowd, we were shocked to hear that the bells had been ringing joyously at Penrith, to celebrate the triumph. In the rebellion of the year 1745, people fled with their valuables from the open country of Patterdale, as a place of refuge, secure from the incursions of strangers. At that time news such as we had heard might have been long in penetrating so far into the recesses of the mountains ; but now, as you know, the approach is easy, and the communication in summer time almost hourly ; nor is this strange, for travellers after pleasure are become not less active, and

more numerous than those who formerly left their homes for the purposes of gain. The priest on the banks of the remotest stream of Lapland will talk familiarly of Bonaparte's last conquests, and discuss the progress of the French Revolution, having acquired much of his information from adventurers impelled by curiosity alone.

The morning was clear and cheerful, after a night of sharp frost. At ten o'clock we took our way on foot towards Pooley Bridge, on the same side of the lake we had coasted in a boat the day before. Looked backwards to the south from our favourite station above Blowick. The dazzling sunbeams striking upon the church and village, while the earth was steaming with exhalations, not traceable in other quarters, rendered their forms even more indistinct than the partial and flitting veil of unillumined vapour had done two days before. The grass on which we trod, and the trees in every thicket, were dripping with melted hoar frost. We observed the lemon-coloured leaves of the birches, as the breeze turned them to the sun, sparkle, or rather *flash*, like diamonds, and the leafless purple twigs were tipped with globes of shining crystal.

The day continued delightful and unclouded to the end. I will not describe the country which we slowly travelled through, nor relate our adventures; and will only add that on the afternoon of the 13th we returned along the banks of Ullswater by the usual road. The lake lay in deep repose, after the agitations of a wet and stormy morning. The trees in Gowbarrow Park were in that state when what is gained by the

disclosure of their bark and branches compensates, almost, for the loss of foliage, exhibiting the variety which characterises the point of time between autumn and winter. The hawthorns were leafless; their round heads covered with rich green berries, and adorned with arches of green brambles, and eglantines hung with glossy hips; and the grey trunks of some of the ancient oaks, which, in the summer season, might have been regarded only for their venerable majesty, now attracted notice by a pretty embellishment of green mosses and fern, intermixed with russet leaves, retained by those slender outstarting twigs, which the veteran tree would not have tolerated in his strength. The smooth silver branches of the ashes were bare; most of the alders as green as the Devonshire cottage-myrtle that weathers the snows of Christmas.—Will you accept it as some apology for my having dwelt so long on the woodland ornaments of these scenes, that artists speak of the trees on the banks of Ullswater, and especially along the bays of Stybarrow crags, as having a peculiar character of picturesque intricacy in their stems and branches, which their rocky stations and the mountain winds have combined to give them? At the end of Gowbarrow Park a large herd of deer were either moving slowly or standing still among the fern. I was sorry when a chance companion, who had joined us by the way, startled them with a whistle, disturbing an image of grave simplicity and thoughtful enjoyment; for I could have fancied that those natives of this wild and beautiful region were partaking with us a sensation of the solemnity of the closing day.

The sun had been set some time, and we could perceive that the light was fading away from the coves of Helvellyn ; but the lake under the luminous sky was more brilliant than before.

After tea at Patterdale set out again ;—a fine evening ; the seven stars close to the mountain top ; all the stars seemed brighter than usual. The steeps were reflected in Brothers Water, and, above the lake, appeared like enormous black, perpendicular walls. The Kirkstone torrents had been swollen by the rains, and now filled the mountain pass with their roaring, which added greatly to the solemnity of our walk. Behind us, when we had climbed to a great height, we saw one light, very distinct, in the vale, like a large red star—a solitary one in the gloomy region. The cheerfulness of the scene was in the sky above us.

Reached home a little before midnight.

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